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HUME'S PHILOSOPHY IN  
HIS PRINCIPAL WORK  
*A TREATISE OF HUMAN NATURE*  
AND IN HIS ESSAYS



HUME'S PHILOSOPHY IN  
HIS PRINCIPAL WORK  
*A TREATISE OF HUMAN NATURE*  
AND IN HIS ESSAYS

BY

FR. VINDING KRUSE, LL.D.

PROFESSOR OF LAW IN  
THE UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN

TRANSLATED BY

P. T. FEDERSPIEL

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- Treat. U.* David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Book I: *Of the Understanding*.  
*Treat. P.* do. Book II: *Of the Passions*.  
*Treat. M.* do. Book III: *Of Morals*.  
~~*Enq. U.*~~ David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*.  
*Enq. M.* David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*.  
*Dissert. P.* David Hume, *A Dissertation on the Passions*.  
 Green. T. H. Green's Introduction to vols. i and ii of Hume's works.  
 Grose. T. H. Grose, *History of Editions*.

The above-mentioned works, as well as Hume's autobiography: *My Own Life*, are quoted from *The Philosophical Works of David Hume*, edited by T. H. Green and T. H. Grose, London, 1890.

- Burton. *Life and Correspondence of David Hume*, by J. H. Burton, Edinburgh, 1846.  
*Letters to Strahan.* *Letters of David Hume to William Strahan*, edited by G. Birkbeck Hill, Oxford, 1888.  
 Grimm. *Zur Geschichte des Erkenntnisproblems*, von Eduard Grimm, Leipzig, 1890.  
 Cassirer. E. Cassirer, *Das Erkenntnisproblem*, vols. i–ii, 2nd ed., 1911, vol. iii, 1920.  
 Ziemels. J. Ziemels, *David Humes Lehre vom Glauben*, Berlin, 1903.

For practical reasons most of the references are put between brackets in the text instead of in footnotes.



## INTRODUCTORY

**I**F there is any definite connexion, any demonstrable relation, between the successive works of a philosopher, this may be conceivable in three different forms.

With some philosophers, such as, for instance, Kant, the sequence of their works practically coincides with the principal stages of the inner development of the thinker. We see the ideas which are fully matured in the main work come into being by gradual stages, ripen and assume a more and more definite form. The possibility of following this development is here given by the fact that the thoughts of the author to some extent continue to circle round the same subjects.

With other philosophers, Søren Kirkegaard, for instance, the chronology of the works is of much less importance, because the consecutive reasonings which the works represent are essentially only connected by the fact that they are all occasioned by, or based on the same general preconceived scheme. Now, even if the subjects of the works are greatly varied without, however, falling outside the general scheme, we have a typical contrast with the former kind of thinker, for strictly speaking there is no real intellectual development. The thinker goes on building on the same construction of ideas, according to the same plan. And usually the entire material has been collected already before the commencement of the work of construction. The individual publications are, therefore, much more in the nature of a single co-ordinated work, one systematic presentation of the views of the author, rather than a number of isolated monographs. The element of time, therefore, loses its significance. And a demonstration of changes in the author's views from one book to the next will be impossible in most cases, because the basis of comparison, i.e. the uniformity of the subjects, is lacking.

Lastly, it might be conceivable that the later works of an author would appear to be, and to a large extent really were, indisputable reiterations of earlier works, only in a different form. Here the problem may sometimes arise whether the difference between the later and earlier works is indeed entirely and purely formal, and whether there is not, at any rate on

certain points, also a real change of views, a true development in the author's thoughts. In other words, the question may be asked whether we are not faced with a combination between this category and the first category mentioned, that of authors whose consecutive works mark the stages of development of their thoughts. If this problem is raised, a closer comparison between such works will present great difficulties, for the difference in form and the marked similarity of the contents act in the same direction by obscuring the actual conditions, and a confusion of formal and real differences is very apt to take place. As a result of these difficulties we shall often be unable to solve the problem merely by a comparison, however thorough and precise it may be; we must resort to other sources outside the contents of the works; and it will be of particular importance if we can ascertain with certainty the reasons which have induced the author to publish once more, in a different form, thoughts which at any rate to some extent correspond with those of earlier publications. For it is evident that if it could be proved, for instance, that the motives were entirely different, and without connexion with the actual ideological contents, the view which led to the conclusion that the difference between the works was in all cases purely formal, and which was in agreement with the results of a thorough comparison, would most probably be correct.

Now, if we ask whether the relation between David Hume's two major philosophical works, the *Treatise* and the *Essays*, may be fitted into any one of the above-mentioned three forms, in other words, whether the *Essays* are either a further development of the views expressed by Hume in the *Treatise*, or a continuation or a repetition of this work, we shall discover that it is impossible to arrive at an answer which at the same time is applicable to all the essays. The answers must, as a closer comparison shows, be different for the different groups of essays. Apart from some essays which have no internal connexion whatever with the *Treatise* (e.g. the essays on political economy and the majority of those published only in 1757, *v. Grose*, pp. 56 and 60) we may distinguish at any rate between two main groups, each of which bears its particular relation to Hume's juvenile work. One of these main groups (which we may call the political,

because the most important and weighty essays in this group deal with political subjects) includes the earliest essays, i.e. those published two years after the *Treatise* in the years 1741-2. The relation of this group to the *Treatise* is not disputed. There can hardly be any doubt that it must be described as the second of the three forms of relation set out above, as a continuation based on the same plan and largely written at the same time as the juvenile work. In the preface to the *Treatise* Hume says that if his *Enquiry* on understanding and on the passions (Books I and II of the *Treatise*) 'has the good fortune to meet with success', he will 'proceed to the examination of morals, politics, and criticism'. The inquiry concerning morals was, indeed, published shortly afterwards as Book III of the *Treatise*, but Hume was prevented from following up these three books with a fourth on politics because they did not in any way find favour with the reading public. If they had, the *Treatise* would have been continued in a fourth book on 'Politics'. This continuation did come, but in an entirely different book and an entirely different form, as Hume used his political studies as material for his first group of essays (v. Grose, p. 44), the political group. A closer comparison between this group and the *Treatise*, therefore, is both impossible and without interest in view of what we have pointed out at the beginning with regard to the second class of authors; but even if this were not the case this group does not concern our task, for its contents are politics. We shall subsequently return to the few essays on moral philosophy which it also contains.

Unlike the political group, the other main group fulfils all the conditions of a comparison with the *Treatise*. It includes all the philosophical essays proper, in the first place the essays published in 1748 which were later compiled into one work under the title *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*; in the second place the great essay published in 1751, *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, and finally a smaller work, *A Dissertation on the Passions*, which Hume did not publish until 1757.

The relation of this group to the *Treatise* is, however, disputed and generally far more difficult to determine and characterize than was the case with the political group. The point is that with regard to the philosophical group Hume belongs

entirely to the third group of authors mentioned above, for on the one hand it is generally agreed<sup>1</sup> that this group of essays is to a large extent merely a repetition of the Treatise in a varied form, *Enq. U.* being a repetition of part of the Treatise, Book I, *Enq. M.* of the Treatise, Book III, and *Dissert. P.* of Book II; but on the other hand this particular group also raises the problem which, as shown above, may arise under such circumstances, and which in this case may be stated thus: whether the difference between the philosophy of the Essays and of the Treatise is in actual fact purely formal on all points.<sup>2</sup>

The essential object of this book is, therefore, to find the true solution of this problem of historical philosophy in its entire extent, and as exhaustively as possible to determine and characterize the relation between the two presentations of Hume's philosophy.

I pointed out at the beginning that the main difficulty in connexion with problems of this nature lies in the fact that on the one hand there is a great difference of form, and on the other hand a great similarity of contents, when we compare the two works; and I also noted that owing to this difficulty the actual words of the two works did not always supply a satisfactory answer to the question whether an alteration was formal or real, but that we had to resort to other auxiliary sources.

This is also the case with our present problem. For the main difference between the two presentations of Hume's philosophy is that large parts of one (Treatise) are omitted in the other (both *Enq. U.*, *Enq. M.*, and *Dissert. P.*), and the particular point in dispute is the significance of these omissions, especially, however, in the theory of human understanding, the question being: Does such an omission mean a change of views or not? Does each omission denote the abandonment of a point of view or not? We cannot evade this question merely by ascertaining

<sup>1</sup> T. H. Green and T. H. Grose in the preface of their edition, Jodl in *Leben und Philosophie David Humes*, Høffding in his *History of Philosophy*, and Grimm, p. 484, where it is admitted that Hume's view in his main inquiry is identical in both works.

<sup>2</sup> This question is answered in the affirmative by Green and Grose, Høffding and Jodl, but in the negative by Grimm. The latter author has only examined the question in relation to the theory of knowledge. Also Cassirer and Ziemels hold that on individual points Hume had changed his views in the Enquiry as compared with the Treatise; see below.



the omission in each individual case, and not inquire into the reasons for the omission simply because we find no reference in the essays themselves, thereby satisfying ourselves that no comparison can be made; for in the first place it is a characteristic of the essays of the philosophical group that they do exclude part of the subjects of the *Treatise* from separate treatment, but on the other hand Hume refers to these subjects by spasmodic observations, which either reveal or imply definite views thereon; and in the next place it has actually been held that certain conclusions might be drawn from the several omissions, even in passages which do not contain as much as positive, incidental utterances.<sup>1</sup> The error of these conclusions is, in my opinion, that they have been drawn irrespective of other sources, and purely on the basis of the contents of the *Essays* which on this point are entirely insufficient. Where even the spasmodic observations cease, and therefore the positive presentation is silent, there is obviously no basis on which to arrive at conclusions for or against a change of view; it is logically impossible to interpret a mere omission as an indication that Hume has abandoned his earlier views. Nevertheless, this form of deduction from one proposition is what has been attempted.<sup>2</sup> Instead of looking for other elements, i.e. information from elsewhere concerning the reasons for the omissions, these reasons are simply invented. But such deductions must, therefore, be quite hazardous, indeed fantastic, because they receive no support either from the text of the essays or from external trustworthy sources.

Perhaps it is believed (Grimm, p. 571) that a source might be found for an assumption of this kind in Hume's 'Advertisement' in which he disowns his *Treatise*; but in that case it is a most extraordinary procedure not in any way to examine the value of this declaration, which Hume only issued shortly before his death, almost a lifetime after the publication of the *Treatise* and the *Essays*. And an inquiry is all the more necessary because the general value of this declaration is highly disputed (*v. Grose*, pp. 37-9, and the note to p. 39).

The question, therefore, which continually recurs when we

<sup>1</sup> Grimm, pp. 576-84, and Ziemels, pp. 80-1.

<sup>2</sup> Grimm, pp. 575-7, 583-4.

have to characterize the philosophy of the Essays in relation to the Treatise is this: What importance may with certainty be attached to these omissions, and what is behind the scattered remarks? Briefly speaking: What is the reason for the strongly abridged and limited presentation of Hume's philosophy given in his Essays? And as this question cannot, for the reasons given above, be dismissed or decided purely on the basis of a random speculation on the omissions alone, there is only one course left: namely to invoke the assistance of other external sources.

Now as Hume has to be classified with the third group of authors referred to above also in the sense that the difficulty of determining the nature of the difference between the two works forces us to resort to outside sources, it becomes a matter of the greatest importance in Hume's case by means of the external sources to determine precisely what reasons moved him to publish once more, though in a different form, at any rate a very large portion of his earlier views from the Treatise; for as it was pointed out at the beginning of this book, if these reasons could be disclosed, the problem of the true relation between the Treatise and the Essays, and therewith especially the question of the reason for the abridged and limited presentation in the Essays, would be if not fully yet at any rate provisionally and hypothetically solved; hypothetically, because it must, of course, be verified through a closer comparison between the two works.

If these sources now prove that Hume's motive for publishing the Essays was that he wanted to inform the public that on certain points of his philosophy he had modified or changed the views expressed in his Treatise, and that this work, therefore, so to speak, required a new edition, then the interpretation of the omissions as an abandonment of earlier views is true, and the conclusions which are at present quite unwarranted and unprovable would have obtained that necessary and secure foundation of premisses which it hitherto lacked. But if, on the other hand, we come to the conclusion that Hume's motive was an entirely different one, having no connexion whatever with the contents or the ideas of the Treatise, then the view that regards the condensed form of the Essays and their restriction to certain subjects as the expression of only a formal change will

have risen from mere possibility to strong probability, which, if it can be verified by experience, will have achieved that degree of certainty which it is possible for human knowledge to acquire.

Before we then go on to a detailed comparison we must at any rate provisionally make up our minds which of these two views must be adopted, and only then verify it by the contents of the works.

The available sources referred to, are, of course, all those from which we may draw any information about what took place in Hume's mind in the period between the publication of the *Treatise* and of the *Essays*.<sup>1</sup> The more we find out about this intellectual life, the more we approach the solution of the problem, and the more we realize what a strange and in many ways unique personality Hume was, the more we shall discover that there is really no problem. This mentality is all the more extraordinary and without parallel because it reveals something entirely different from what we might justly expect. We expected to find the great thinker who had written his *Treatise of Human Nature*—one of the most profound, thoroughly reasoned, and purely scientific works in the history of philosophy—energetically continuing his work on the great problems he had raised in this publication, or otherwise pursuing new equally important questions; and this expectation was all the more justified because Hume had completed this great effort already before his twenty-fifth year (Grose, p. 37). At this age neither Kant nor Spinoza, for instance, would have believed that they had come to the end of the problems of philosophy. But instead we discover Hume occupied by entirely different speculations, entirely alien to the realm of philosophy. The reason is well known; after the publication of the *Treatise* an event had occurred which, owing to the author's strangely complex character, was to exert a fatal influence on his entire future life and philosophy.

Between the publication of successive works of, for instance, Kant there was no such important occurrence of an external

<sup>1</sup> Apart from biographical facts there are letters to relatives and intimate friends and generally all personal utterances in which we may with certainty expect to find Hume's own innermost ideas.

nature, i.e. one without actual relation to the contents of the works, as that which took place in Hume's life between the 'Treatise and the Essays, and which became the supreme event of his manhood: the complete fiasco of the 'Treatise. And whilst the great thinkers have not usually been influenced to any appreciable extent by their relations with the public, it might be expected—provided one was acquainted with Hume's character—that the public disfavour with which the 'Treatise was received would become the decisive turning-point of his literary activity, and indeed determine his entire future development.

Hume was a far more complex, versatile, and ambitious character than, for instance, Kant or Spinoza. He combined two glaring contrasts: he was not only, like these, a great solitary thinker, knowing but one purpose, the realization of truth; he was, indeed, a man with many irons in the fire, a man with divers aims. And among these aims the realization of truth was not the most important; for Hume was possessed by literary ambition to such an extent that he set aside all considerations, even the consideration of truth, in order to win the favour of the public. For instance, it is well known that in his later life Hume time after time suppressed his most radical ideas in order to be better appreciated by the public,<sup>1</sup> and it is characteristic that in his autobiography he describes the 'ruling passion' of his life not as a Spinoza would have done, as the urge of philosophical cognition, but love of literary fame (*My Own Life*, p. 8).

And this literary ambition was not of the nature which was content with the immortality usually accorded to great thinkers by a late posterity; but, practical and concrete as he was, he craved first and foremost the admiration of his contemporaries (v. *My Own Life*, p. 7, where his last thoughts dwell on this, and *Letters to Strahan*, pp. 49, 57-9, 113, and 255, where we discover the true reason for his genuine hatred of the English; the French, on the other hand, he exalts, and during his stay in France it is well known that he was much admired). And therefore he was consistently led to regard the judgement of the public as his supreme court, his only guide in his literary work.

Hence it is easy to understand what an event such as the

<sup>1</sup> *Letters to Strahan*, pp. 331-2.

failure of the *Treatise* would mean to a man of Hume's character. It simply meant that from that time onwards he would have to abandon the serene problems, far removed from daily life, which he had dealt with so thoroughly and profoundly in his *Treatise*, for the superficial English public certainly failed to appreciate this very thoroughness and depth. An author seeking the favour of these readers would have to keep fairly close to the earth and its practical life. Now here Hume was aided by the other major quality he possessed, the great versatility of his mind. Ambition enlisted the services of versatility; and thus, failing to achieve the desired fame by his strictly scientific philosophy in the *Treatise*, Hume had enough intellectual adroitness to become a favourite and widely-read writer on popular philosophy and an essayist, dealing with more mundane subjects, and having later entirely left philosophy he was even able to become a pioneer of entirely different, more practical, and more generally understood sciences such as political economy<sup>1</sup> and history. A good illustration of the extent to which Hume felt dependent on the favour of his public may be found in the preface to the *Treatise*, which hints what will happen if the work is not a popular success. He concludes: 'The approbation of the public I consider as the greatest reward of my labours; but am determined to regard its judgement, *whatever it be* [my italics], as my best instruction.' As we see, a complete and unconditional surrender to fickle public opinion. And Hume kept his word. 'The failure of the *Treatise* was an all too clear 'instruction' from the public that it was not in the least interested even in the most subtle and profound psychological analyses.

The literary public of eighteenth-century England was certainly not without general intellectual and philosophical interests, but it wanted lighter and more pleasant intellectual nourishment than the *Treatise*, presented in an entertaining and varying form. It demanded that kind of popularized philosophy which abounded at the time in the numerous weekly papers, the self-styled *Spectators*. It much preferred the amiable Addison to the strictly scientific Locke and Berkeley.

After the failure of the *Treatise* Hume had gauged the taste of

<sup>1</sup> Burton rightly calls Hume's *Political Discourses* the cradle of political economy (Burton, i. 354).

the public and immediately broke off to become a popular philosopher; having been a Berkeley he now wanted to be an Addison, a writer whom he came to admire, and whom he certainly took as the prototype of his essays (*v. Dissert. P.*, p. 145, and an Essay: 'Of Simplicity and Refinement in Writing', p. 240). It was soon revealed that also in this direction Hume's capacity was great. His essays soon became favourite reading in large circles.

The preface to the first collection of essays (which we called the political group, 1741) clearly reveals this metamorphosis of Hume's, and it also shows—regrettably so—how far Hume would go to win public favour.

In the first place he presents himself as an author publishing his first work (both the *Treatise* and these essays were published anonymously); any suspicion that he might be the author of the unfortunate *Treatise* must, of course, be removed; and in the next place he declares that these essays were originally intended for publication in some weekly, and that they were at any rate as much suited to such scattered publication as to compilation in one book, each essay forming a separate article without any systematic connexion with the others, a fact which in the author's opinion made them more readable, as the readers were saved the trouble of finding the thread winding through them. These remarks in the preface are excellently calculated to make the essays as attractive as possible to the reader; through this preface we can almost picture Hume standing in a shop volubly offering his goods for sale. And as we see, Hume already at this stage *tacitly disowns the Treatise*—all for the 'approbation of the public'.

Hence it is not surprising that it was the taste of the public that decided the contents of the Essays. In the first place Hume would—at any rate for the time being—keep well clear of treating the subjects of the *Treatise* again. Therefore the earliest group of essays was the political and not the philosophical one. Political subjects of the day were, of course, much more likely to appeal to a large circle of readers than the learned theory of understanding and ethics of the *Treatise*. In this group, however, a few essays on moral philosophy are interspersed. But some of them are not so much inquiries into moral philosophy as poetical descriptions, indeed quite lyrical displays,

for Hume was even capable of bursting into poetry when this was needed to obtain literary fame. This applies to the essays: 'The Epicurean', 'The Stoic', 'The Platonist', and 'The Sceptic'. And the others are of a so special, popular-journalistic nature that they seem to have been written much more for purposes of imitating the contents of the weeklies than because the author was interested in the subject-matter, as for instance the essays on 'Polygamy and Divorces', and 'Of Love and Marriage'. All these subjects are at any rate far removed from the ethics of the Treatise (*v.* also Grose, pp. 43-4).

It would not be right to say, however, that Hume had entirely abandoned the idea to have on some future occasion his youthful philosophy of the Treatise distributed to the general public. Only he would bide his time. First of all he would establish a reputation and secure a circulation by means of his political essays; they should, so to speak, prepare the way for the philosophy of the Treatise. This intention is clearly revealed in a letter which he wrote to Henry Home in June 1742, and in which he says that if his recently published essays continued to be a success (and they were indeed quickly sold out), they should 'bring forward the rest of my Philosophy, which is of a more *durable, though of a harder and more stubborn nature*'.<sup>1</sup> The passage quoted in italics shows two things: in the first place that Hume still, in spite of his failure, did not in his own mind question the value and true significance of the philosophy of his youth as expounded in the Treatise; but in the second place that at the same time he was equally convinced that this philosophy in its 'stubborn', consistent, and characteristically scientific form was beyond the scope of his contemporaries, and accordingly unsuited to gain their approval.

If, therefore, this philosophy were to be presented at all to the public again, it would certainly have to be very considerably amended so as to be more adapted to the reasoning, faculties, and ideas of ordinary mortals, and so rewritten as to become entertaining and pleasant reading like the political essays. And it is these amendments that we find in the philosophy of the Essays. First and foremost the strict scientific method which characterized the Treatise has been removed. The style and the

<sup>1</sup> Burton, i. 143.

tone are as light and entertaining as in the remainder of the essays. But also the form of presentation commends itself a much to the public taste, and is just as ingratiating as in the political group. It is easy to trace the reason for Hume's effort to give the Essays this particular form. His experience was dearly earned. The poor reception given to the Treatise was above all due to its far too great length and its cumbrous systematic arrangement. A large work of several volumes would never rally a great number of readers, at that time even less than to-day. In editing his Essays Hume therefore made it an inviolable principle never to publish major systematic surveys, but only short isolated articles or papers on definite concrete subjects.

In compiling his Essays, therefore, Hume had to abandon entirely the systematic structure of the three books of the Treatise, and accordingly each of them became one small independent volume. And Hume went even further in his subdivision: for the first book of the Treatise, which indeed would appear to the ordinary reader as the most 'hard and stubborn' part of this work, was from the outset changed into a whole collection of small essays, even though no more than half of this book was thus popularized. Only later these Essays were compiled into one work, *Enquiry*, &c. Moreover, in order to make this collection more entertaining, several essays were interposed which have nothing to do with the Treatise but which suited the readers' taste better. These were such essays as: 'Of Miracles' and 'Of a Particular Providence and of a Future State'. The second book of the Treatise, or the psychology of the passions, was abridged into the insignificant little essay: *A Dissertation on the Passions*, and the third book was reduced to the corresponding *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*. And externally these essays had nothing to do with each other. They were issued independently and at fairly long intervals (1748, 1751, 1757) and under quite different titles (*Essays*, *Enquiry*, *Dissertation*) as late as from ten to twenty years after the publication of the Treatise. As in the case of the political group everything was excellently calculated to present the essays as small independent papers, written at quite different times, and above all any suspicion that it was a reiteration of the Treatise was warded off.

We have now examined the past history of the Essays; we



have seen how they came into being as a necessary result of the strange crisis which took place in Hume's mental life in the period immediately after the publication of the *Treatise*; all, philosophical as well as political, originated in the enormous impression which the failure of the *Treatise* made on Hume's mind, so susceptible to the praise and blame of the public. And this impression not only marked their creation, when Hume drew up his plan for them, but characterized their entire progress.

In view of this extraordinary, nay unique, origin of the *Essays* it will no longer be difficult for us to arrive at an intermediate conclusion with regard to our problem and the two points of view which have been advanced for its solution. For the very origin of the *Essays* has at any rate shown us that Hume's motive for publishing the philosophical essays was not a desire to tell the world that he now took a different view of the problems of philosophy from that expressed in the *Treatise*, but the idea, quite simple and natural from the point of view of his character, of obtaining a wider circulation for his philosophy; first of all we saw that in order to obtain this circulation as quickly as possible he endeavoured to make the public entirely forget the *Treatise*, and especially that he was its author, whilst at the same time he tried, after much circumlocution and hocus-pocus, to serve the heavy food of this book in a more inviting form; but in the next place Hume's main occupation in the period between the *Treatise* and the *Essays* was not at all to speculate on the lofty problems of the *Treatise*; he worried only about one problem: the reasons for the failure of the *Treatise* and how to find new ways of acquiring literary fame in spite of this fiasco.

But hence it follows that it is overwhelmingly probable that the reasons for the difference between the philosophy of the *Treatise* and that of the *Essays* should be sought not in a change or abandonment of earlier views but in circumstances of an entirely different nature, more naturally consistent with Hume's character and leanings. The same considerations, partly of popularization, partly of accommodating the public taste, which made him cut up the *Treatise* into a number of smaller essays, and which generally determined the external form of presentation

of the essays, their style and manner, also naturally necessitated a paring of the contents of the *Treatise* and other amendments which could adapt it better to the mode of thought of ordinary people. There were parts of this work which, as we shall subsequently see, certainly could not be so popularized and, moreover, there were some which were so decidedly contrary to the thoughts and feelings of ordinary people that Hume would not risk publishing them once again.

From what we know of Hume, from our psychological acquaintance with the peculiarities of his character, these considerations were the most natural thing in the world to apply, even to a very large extent, in his choice of the contents of his philosophical essays.

In the philosophical group there is one essay which is of supreme interest in this connexion, because it positively shows that in writing it Hume was highly susceptible to these considerations. And it gives us a very good general impression of the way in which Hume popularized the *Treatise*. This essay is the first of those published in 1748 and is headed: 'Of two Species of Philosophy.' It rightly forms the introduction to the philosophy of the *Essays*, because here, as it were, Hume gathers strength after the failure of the *Treatise*, meditating on nothing more or less than what to do to become a popular philosopher. There are two kinds of philosophy, he says: 'the accurate and abstruse philosophy' and 'the easy and obvious philosophy'. The former kind, to which belong for instance Locke's writings and those of the author of the *Treatise*, whose name, of course, he does not disclose, is in a very unfortunate position; it will never become popular, it is too abstruse and accurate, i.e. too scientific to be entertaining, which is the first demand of the public. Although this scientific philosophy, as far as the contents are concerned, is far more important and valuable than the other kind, it never attains to the distribution and renown of the latter kind. In his *Treatise* Hume was so simple as to praise his country as the one in which scientific studies were not only carried on with the greatest thoroughness but also held highest in esteem. In his *Essays* he has to confess with a sigh that the more entertaining authors such as Addison are far more famous and well known than the profound, scientific Locke. It

may be that Addison 'will be read with pleasure' when Locke shall be entirely forgotten, says Hume (*Enq. U.*, p. 5), but the note on the same page breathes regret at this state of affairs, for his heart still clings to scientific thoroughness. But as it is an unfortunate fact that 'easy and obvious philosophy will always, with the generality of mankind, have the preference above the accurate and abstruse' (*Enq. U.*, p. 4), there is nothing for Hume to do but to return to the earth from the Treatise, the most abstruse philosophy, perhaps, which had yet been offered to the public, and become 'practical and sociable' (*Enq. U.*, p. 6) like Addison; Hume would try to combine the two kinds of philosophy, the scientific and the sociable (*Enq. U.*, pp. 12 and 13), or as he puts it: 'be a philosopher; but, amidst all your philosophy, be still a man'. The purpose of all these reasonings is clearly to justify his intention of making a compromise between the philosophy of the Treatise and the taste of the general public. This compromise, therefore, is the philosophy of the Essays.<sup>1</sup>

For the time being, therefore, we can do nothing but adhere to the view that the difference between the Essays and the Treatise is merely of a formal nature;<sup>2</sup> and hence nothing is more natural than to explain the disputed omissions as due to reasons of popularization.

This view is also supported by later personal utterances of Hume, which have been preserved, and among which especially Hume's letter of 1751 to his good friend Gilbert Elliot of Minto, the lawyer and politician, is of importance. Here he says expressly, recommending his friend at the same time to read the *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* instead of the Treatise, that the philosophical principles of these two books are identical, but he believes that from a purely formal point of view the Enquiry is on a higher level than the Treatise, as the presentation in the former has gained in lucidity and simplicity, especially by being abridged. He expresses his judgement in favour of the Enquiry by the three Latin words: *Addo dum minuo*. In another letter (Burton, i. 98) he is even more severe with the Treatise,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also Burton, i. 77.

<sup>2</sup> v. besides the authors referred to above in note 2 on p. 4, A. Richl, *Der philosophische Kriticismus*, vol. i, 2nd ed., Leipzig, 1908, p. 106 et seq.

regretting the premature and hasty publication of this work at a time when he was young and inexperienced—he did not know his public yet—and he simply declares that he cannot bring himself to re-read his juvenile work. But his complaints are always directed against points of form, the style and the tone which dominate this work, especially a certain youthful, distasteful self-satisfaction. But he still adheres to its principles, and says: ‘what success the same doctrines, better illustrated and expressed, may meet with, *adhuc sub judice lis est*’. And he even doubts that he will ever live to see the truth decided. His statements in his autobiography point in the same direction. Here he says expressly that the *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* is merely a repetition of the first part of the *Treatise*, and he believes that the reason for the failure of the *Treatise* was to be found in the form rather than in the contents, ‘more from the manner than the matter’ (*My Own Life*, p. 3).

Now with regard, finally, to the ‘Advertisement’ in which Hume frankly discards his *Treatise*, it is obvious that it can carry no weight against the material quoted above. As we have previously suggested it is a very late utterance, made in the eleventh hour. But in the next place it is a public utterance, addressed to his readers generally; and it has already been sufficiently demonstrated what importance may be attached to the behaviour of a man like Hume when facing the general public. Actually it was not the first time he renounced his *Treatise*; as we have seen above he already did so in reality when he published his first *Essays*. And it was purely the consideration of literary fame and not of truth which caused him in the foreword of these *Essays* tacitly to disclaim his *Treatise*. But lastly, the actual contents of this ‘Advertisement’ show nothing more than the aforesaid letter, namely that Hume did not like the *Treatise*, that he simply had a grudge against this unfortunate work.<sup>1</sup> We shall subsequently return to the reasons for this grudge. But the ‘Advertisement’ says exactly the same as the letters: that the *Enquiry* and the *Treatise* contain the same principles and reasonings, and that he regrets the form and youthfulness of the *Treatise*.

In the foregoing we have chiefly dealt with the external

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also Riehl, *op. cit.* i. 106.

sources. From these we have extracted all that could illustrate for us the relation between the philosophy of the Treatise and the Essays, and we have thereby obtained a view of the *historical background and raison d'être of the Essays*. But in the next place we have considered the style, manner of presentation, and general form of the Essays. And we found that the *form of the Essays* told us the same as their historical origin, namely, that the view was correct with which we began: that the difference between the philosophy of the Treatise and that of the Essays is only formal, but which we may now formulate more definitely by saying that the philosophy of the Essays is a compromise between that of the Treatise and the habitual thoughts, feelings, and taste of the public, having originated as the product of two factors: the fiasco of the Treatise and Hume's insatiable ambition.

There remains then the task of inquiring by a closer and more detailed comparative study whether also the *contents of the philosophy of the Essays* confirm this view.

But it is evident that what the form and past history of the Essays has taught us will exercise a very considerable influence on this more detailed comparison. For whenever the contents fail, i.e. when we are faced with the omissions already spoken of, we have to apply the result at which we have arrived through this introductory inquiry on the basis of the external sources. For it is only by this means that we have been at all able to adopt a fairly well founded attitude to these omissions. We have at any rate learned this much from the historical circumstances of the Essays, that we have to exercise the greatest caution in regarding omissions and other changes as equivalent to real changes in Hume's philosophy. Consequently, in our comparison we have to take up exactly the opposite position to that of the author of *Zur Geschichte des Erkenntnisproblems*. Whilst he appears to have accepted as a main rule the view that whenever there is an omission in the Essays Hume has changed his opinion, we must, as a result of the foregoing inquiry, follow the opposite rule. We cannot acknowledge real changes unless they are substantiated by positive proof, i.e. when Hume's views as expressed in the Essays are clearly and verbally in conflict with those of the Treatise.

## HUME'S GENERAL PHILOSOPHICAL STAND- POINT IN HIS TREATISE AND ESSAYS

HUME'S philosophy, like that of most of the other earlier great philosophers, naturally falls into two parts: Hume's conception of the universe and his conception of life, in other words, his theory of human knowledge and his ethics. Under the head of ethics we include not only his moral, legal, and political philosophy but also his psychology of human passions, although this is, of course, a somewhat summary classification.

But before we thus split up the comparison into two parts we must consider first certain general fundamental ideas which form the common basis on which Hume builds up both his theory of understanding and his ethics. These fundamental ideas reveal not only the objective and the vital nerve of his own philosophical aims, but indeed also disclose the point of view from which he regarded philosophy; they show us what philosophy in his opinion is, or rather what to his mind it ought to be. This general fundamental philosophical standpoint, therefore, characterizes Hume as a philosopher and also places him in the history of philosophy, because on all essential points it coincides with that of his predecessors, Locke and Berkeley. Our first task in the present comparative study is now to inquire whether this main point of view is the same in the *Treatise* and in Hume's other writings or not.

*A priori* there is no probability of a change in this standpoint. A typically scientific-minded thinker—and this is what Hume was more than any one else—will not, as a poet or artist may often do, entirely change his fundamental point of view, and cannot throw overboard all his former basic ideas, acquired through laborious studies, and take in new ones, for he will have sufficient spiritual ballast to prevent him from thus foundering; and the innermost characteristic of his nature is a striving for continuity. The fundamental view on which the *Treatise* is based had been established as the result of numerous and troublesome studies and of profound deliberations. There is not, therefore, at the outset any probability that we shall find this fundamental view changed in the *Essays*. It is another

matter that the reasons of popularization referred to in the introductory chapter might have induced Hume to omit any reference to it in his Essays. As we shall presently see, however, there was nothing to offend the popular view in this fundamental standpoint, nothing which might therefore have led to an omission. On the contrary, it was in a high degree likely to appeal to the ordinary man.

Sometimes Hume, as a philosopher, has been characterized by the term Sceptic. As is so often the case, a mere word like this conveys nothing until it has been precisely defined. If sceptic is taken to mean a man who in all circumstances is in doubt about man's ability to achieve any knowledge, in other words, a genuine classical sceptic such as the Greek Pyrrho, then the term is falsely applied to Hume. It is true that Hume cherishes the greatest doubt about the great intellectual constructions of his predecessors on the continent, the system-philosophers. Already in a letter of 1734 (Grose, p. 19) he says that philosophy, in the state in which it was then, appeared to him to be nothing but 'endless disputes, even in the most fundamental articles'. And we meet the same sceptical mood in the *Treatise*. Philosophy, he says, has hitherto only consisted of 'principles taken upon trust, consequences lamely deduced, want of coherence in the parts and of evidence in the whole', and in the following passage it is revealed against whom these harsh words are directed: 'these are everywhere to be met with in the systems of the most eminent philosophers' and so forth (*Treat. U.*, p. 305). In these words, 'principles taken upon trust, consequences lamely deduced', lies the most scathing criticism of the systems of Spinoza, Leibniz, and Descartes, which even 'have obtained the greatest credit', &c.

In the Essays the same charge against the metaphysical systems is repeated. Here, indeed, was a point on which Hume really fully shared the popular view: all metaphysics of the kind expounded by Spinoza is both unintelligible and useless. Hume, therefore, truly rejoices to tell his readers at the beginning of his Essays that far from leading them into obscure metaphysics he intends, on the contrary, by profound thinking to destroy 'all abstruse philosophy and metaphysical jargon' and thus deliver them from 'the most uncertain and disagreeable part of learning'

(*Enq. U.*, p. 9). For the instruction of his readers he employs a parable in which he describes the old metaphysicians as robbers hiding in dark forests where nobody has hitherto been able to capture them. But we only have to persevere, he believes, and he sets himself the task of illuminating the dark forests of metaphysics by thorough thinking and thereby driving out the robbers. These robbers are clearly, though no names are mentioned, Spinoza, Descartes, and the Occasionalists.

But however much scepticism Hume thus directs against the great systems, both in his *Treatise* and in his *Essays*, he is by no means a sceptic in the colloquial sense. This may also be seen from both the *Treatise* and the *Essays*. In both we find that he is no mere negative critic of the system-philosophers. What he displays in dealing with them is just the healthy English scepticism which shuns all speculation which has no firm foothold in experience. In reality his profound distrust of the speculative philosophy is rooted in an even more profound faith, a belief that there is quite another philosophy which in a better and far more certain manner leads to the comprehension of Truth. He realizes that the speculative philosophy will cut no more ice, because the multiplicity of its systems and its internal conflicts have led the philosophers into 'endless disputes, even in the most fundamental articles'. And Hume is by no means a sceptical, disinterested spectator of these disputes, on the contrary, he is deeply grieved on behalf of philosophy, because he realizes that they will gradually undermine the repute of philosophy as a science (*Treat. U.*, pp. 305-6). His hard and sternly reproving words on the old philosophers, in the *Treatise* as well as in the *Essays*, are indeed derived from a grave fear of the priggish popular scepticism, 'the rabble without the doors' (i.e. the doors of philosophy) as he calls it in his *Treatise* (*Treat. U.*, p. 305), which deduces the fall of philosophy from the fact that the philosophers disagree about practically everything. In his *Essays* he is simply driven to ward off this popular scepticism by a lengthy defence of the utility of his own philosophy and by throwing all the blame on the metaphysical 'robbers' (*Enq. U.*, pp. 6-12).

But when the speculative philosophy has been thus reduced, what philosophy are we to put in its place? what science can



we substitute for it? Hume provides the reply both in the *Treatise* and in the *Essays*: The science of Human Nature, of the human mind (*Treat. U.*, p. 307, and *Enq. U.*, pp. 9-10), i.e. man's knowledge of his own self. If philosophy is to recover its old position and become a solid and certain science, it must, in Hume's own words, 'march up directly to the capital or centre of all those sciences (i.e. the philosophical sciences): Human Nature itself' (*Treat. U.*, p. 307) instead of moving, like the old metaphysicians, along the circumference where all human knowledge becomes uncertain, indeed impossible, and where such wretched terms as substance, modes, accidents, and the majority of similar metaphysical jargon belong. Hume could never find terms too harsh to express his condemnation of this metaphysical philosophy and its conceptions; in his *Essays* he even says that it is mixed with simple popular superstition which renders it mystical, so that it acquires an air of wisdom (*Enq. U.*, p. 9). We shall presently see how he criticizes the metaphysical conceptions from the point of view of his own theory of human understanding.

Philosophy, then, must be the study of human nature, i.e. psychology, it must be the knowledge of Self instead of the knowledge of Nature. With regard to self-knowledge Hume asserts that this is man's most important science, but that hitherto it has been the most neglected (*Treat. U.*, p. 552). But from this neglect the aforesaid disputes and doubt originate. Hume's motto is therefore the same as Socrates': Know thyself; and he is—not without a certain national pride—aware that together with Locke and Berkeley he holds a position in modern philosophy corresponding to that of Socrates in classical philosophy. He realizes that the first philosophy of man is always the knowledge of Nature and not the knowledge of Self. Just as Thales and the other ancient Greek natural philosophers preceded Socrates, so the natural and systematic philosophers of the Renaissance preceded the English empirical psychology, beginning with Locke (*Treat. U.*, p. 308, and *Enq. U.*, pp. 10 and 11). Like Locke, Hume has faith in this new science and trusts that certainty and agreement will now take the place of the doubt and divisions which hitherto dominated philosophy, provided we acquire a thorough knowledge of the essence of our own

intelligence, its qualities, and their extent. On this point he expresses himself in precisely the same way as Locke (*Enq. U.*, p. 7).

Hume, therefore, is no sceptic; it is true that he questions the old philosophy, but he fully believes in the new. It is an entirely different matter that through the very study of this new philosophy, through his own inquiries into the psychology of the human mind in Book I of the *Treatise*, Hume arrives at the most sceptical results with regard to the capacity of the human mind to comprehend the nature surrounding us. But this scepticism with regard to the understanding of Nature does not in the least shake his faith in the understanding of the human Self; this still remained to him the only source of true knowledge; indeed it was—quite naturally—even further exalted in his opinion as gradually the possibilities of a real knowledge of Nature diminished. In this respect the closing chapter of Book I of the *Treatise* is interesting. Here Hume, after a thorough psychological inquiry, abandons his conviction of the objective validity of the causal relation, the most important medium of our knowledge of Nature; he has even had to give up the idea of proving that there is an external Nature at all. But when external Nature thus disappears, it is certainly no exaggeration that the knowledge of Self remains the only science of man, and these are the very words in which Hume concludes his theory of human understanding (*Treat. U.*, p. 552). Thus Hume ends as he began, by stressing the Socratic principle, and—as we have seen above—he opened the philosophy of the *Essays* with the same doctrine.

This dominating feature which marks the trend of all Hume's thinking, and which coincides with that of Locke and Berkeley, this core from which all his thoughts issue, is found unchanged and equally fresh in the *Essays* as well as in the *Treatise*. This is the starting-point in both works.

# COMPARISON OF HUME'S THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE TREATISE AND IN THE ESSAYS

## SHORT SURVEY OF THE THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE TREATISE AND ITS MAIN CHARACTERISTICS

**I**N highly systematized sciences we often meet the distinction between what is general and what is special. What is general are the principles that underlie all the phenomena falling within the framework of this science; what is special is only the concrete application of these principles to the numerous individual phenomena.

A thorough, scientific, systematic method of this nature may be encountered everywhere in the theory of knowledge in the *Treatise*. The first book, 'Of the Understanding', falls into four parts; of these the first is general, the other three special.

In the general part we meet, as might be expected in a study of the mind in general, and of the fundamental psychological conditions in particular, the main points of view, from which Hume solves all the problems of the theory of knowledge.

The three special parts contain merely the concrete application of these general psychological principles to certain important conceptions, especially the fundamental conceptions with which our whole understanding operates, and which therefore in each case contain an individual problem of the theory of knowledge. Among these conceptions Hume examines space and time in Part II, the relation between cause and effect in Part III, and the external, objective world, also called material substance (matter), and the internal, subjective world, also called spiritual substance (mind), in Part IV.

In order to understand the significance and value of this systematic method we must bear in mind the close connexion between Hume's psychology and his theory of knowledge. If we believe with Hume that psychology is the only solid foundation of the theory of knowledge (and indeed of all philosophy), then the connexion between these two sciences becomes so close that one's views on the theory of knowledge are mere logical conclusions from the underlying psychological premisses.

Therefore the errors committed in psychology will be invariably repeated with a vengeance in the theory of knowledge. This is particularly true of Hume, because he is so inflexible in systematic method and so strictly logical in his reasoning. In these two respects the *Treatise* is a masterpiece. The psychological propositions on which Hume bases his general part, he stubbornly adheres to throughout all the special parts, establishing everywhere his results as conclusions from these premisses with undaunted logic, whatever the results may be. The psychological premisses are, as we shall presently see, identical in the *Essays* and in the *Treatise*. From the point of view of comparison, therefore, the greatest interest lies in an examination of Hume's logic in the *Treatise* by noting everywhere the conclusions as to the theory of knowledge which he draws from his psychology. For if we can prove that the logic is indisputable, all the special parts being really inevitable conclusions from the point of view set forth in the general part, then it is in reality quite irrelevant that Hume in his *Essays* exempted some of the special parts from popularization, provided at the same time that he preserved intact the psychology of the general part. The theory of knowledge laid down in the *Essays*, therefore, does not denote any development, any real progress from the views of the *Treatise*, it is merely excerpted from the latter, and the view advanced in the introductory chapter will then have been verified as far as the theory of knowledge is concerned.

In order to realize that a clear and consistent logic is one of the major virtues of the *Treatise* we must then first approach the psychology, which is its foundation. The peculiarity of this psychology is that it regards the human mind as a conglomeration of sensations, impressions, and ideas, the latter being only images or reflections of the sensations and impressions. In the general part Hume divides all mental perceptions into impressions and ideas. Impressions again are divided into impressions of sensation and impressions of reflection or sentiments or internal impressions (*Treat. U.*, Part I, sects. i and ii), and everywhere in the *Treatise* it is maintained that all our ideas are derived from impressions (*Treat. U.*, pp. 312-14, 327, 340, &c.). A necessary consequence of these propositions, therefore, is

Hume's fundamental principle of the theory of human understanding, that no idea has objective validity unless it corresponds to an impression. It is true that Hume generally only requires of an idea that he be shown the impression from which it is derived (*Treat. U.*, pp. 324, 517, 533, &c.), whether this impression be a sensation or a sentiment associated therewith. But at the same time it is regarded as a matter of course that the ideas derived from sentiments are purely subjective. Therefore, when Hume in his main inquiry into the causal relation comes to the conclusion that the idea of necessary connexion between cause and effect is not derived from a sensation but from an impression of reflection (*Treat. U.*, p. 460), it is stated at the same time as an obvious truth that the idea of necessity arises in ourselves, and not from the *objects*—which means *impressions conveyed through the senses*—(*Treat. U.*, p. 459); it is an internal impression to which nothing objective corresponds.

Hume's criterion of reality, therefore, is the sensations. To him they are always the ultimate means of testing whether an idea corresponds to reality. What you may see, hear, smell, and otherwise perceive through the senses is to Hume the quintessence of all reality, and he indignantly rejects the suggestion that some of our sensations might not be quite reliable (the subjective qualities of the senses). Boyle's and Locke's criticism of the impressions, and their division of them into primary and secondary, he will have nothing to do with (*Treat. U.*, Part IV, sect. iv). Sensations are the ultimate certain facts on which all our understanding is based. It will not do to criticize them.

This criterion of reality which Hume establishes in the general part is then applied to all the ideas which Hume summons for judgement in the special parts. This criterion is the purgatory through which they all have to pass; and not many ideas emerge intact. It would indeed be true to say that many are called but few shall be chosen. The first to suffer are the conceptions of Spinoza and the other system-philosophers. They are completely annihilated whilst Hume scathingly repeats his terrible question: 'From what impressions are you derived?' In this purgatory, therefore, Spinoza's infinite substance, its two attributes, mind and matter, and the modes in which they are

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Hume scornfully compares these philosophers with Tantalus and Sisyphus 'seeking with eagerness what for ever flies us' (*Treat. U.*, p. 509). Their conceptions are purely fictitious.

Hume is equally consistent in his main inquiry concerning the relation of cause and effect. Our objective perception is here two impressions, cause and effect, in constant succession. We have no sensual experience of any necessary connexion between these two observations, but we *feel* it. But a hundred instances reveal no more than one, as there is no logical conclusion from the conception of cause to that of effect. Our spontaneous conclusion from the cause which we perceive to the effect is, therefore, a belief derived from one of our impressions of reflection, that the future will resemble the past (*Treat. U.*, Part III, sects. viii and xiv).

The most beautiful example of Hume's logic is undoubtedly his treatment in the *Treatise* of the conceptions of time and space, and more especially his attitude towards mathematics. As Hume omitted these subjects from his *Essays*, and as it has been asserted that this omission might be interpreted as a giving up or change of these views,<sup>1</sup> it is of the greatest interest to examine how intimately these views depend on the psychological starting-point; for if Hume on this point in the *Treatise* has drawn his conclusions as consistently as is his wont in this work, then these views stand or fall with the starting-point, and Hume cannot change them without modifying this starting-point.

At this point of the *Treatise* Hume criticizes geometry and denies its exactness (cf. especially *Treat. U.*, pp. 350–I, 357, and 374). He maintains that it has no such perfect standard as arithmetic. The geometrical judgements of equality and inequality may indeed be 'infallibly certain', as all logical judgements are, but they are not correspondingly 'exact'.<sup>2</sup> Arithmetic, on the other hand, commands both these qualities. The geometers, in pretending to be able to conceive completely

<sup>1</sup> Grimm, pp. 483 and 578.

<sup>2</sup> Hume's sharp distinction between 'certainty' and 'exactness' does not appear to have been recognized by W. Brede, *Der Unterschied der Lehren Humes im Treatise und im Enquiry*, Halle, 1896, p. 10 et seq.

congruent figures, do not, in Hume's opinion, know what they say, for complete equality is 'a mere fiction of the mind, and useless as well as incomprehensible' (*Treat. U.*, pp. 353-4). From these words, as well as from the remainder of the argument in the same section, we see that Hume not only refuses to acknowledge the exactness of geometry in its practical application to reality (cf. the term 'useless'), but even denounces it as a formal science (cf. the word 'incomprehensible'), see also p. 348, iii. 350, paragraphs 4 and 5; 351, 352 paragraphs 2, 3, and 4; 353, 355, paragraph 3; 357, paragraph 2.<sup>1</sup> These views must surprise the modern reader, for to-day no one will deny the exactness of geometry. But they are not surprising when we realize that they are of the same origin as all Hume's other views on the theory of knowledge.

When applying his criterion to space and time, asking as usual from what impressions they are derived, Hume is at a somewhat embarrassing loss. He searches in vain among the individual impressions of sensation, colour, sound, solidity, &c., but finds nothing from which the idea of space and time may have been copied (*Treat. U.*, p. 341). And as they are not derived from any individual isolated impression they must arise out of a compound of several impressions. This is indeed the only solution which Hume can accept if he is to keep to his original psychological starting-point. According to this the human mind has only impressions and ideas. And an idea can have no other origin than one isolated or several compound impressions. Consequently he has to explain these conceptions from a constellation of several impressions. Thus Hume discovers that the idea of time is derived from a succession of several perceptions, ideas as well as impressions; a conception of time without these changing impressions, i.e. an abstract conception of time or empty time, is therefore a fiction (*Treat. U.*, pp. 342-4).

The idea of space is derived from a compound of two definite impressions, viz. those of colour and of solidity (Berkeley's senses of sight and touch). Or as Hume himself says: 'that compound impression which represents extension consists of several lesser impressions . . . , impressions of atoms or corpuscles endowed with colour and solidity' (*Treat. U.*, p. 345). As,

<sup>1</sup> v. also Green, pp. 230, 231 (§§ 273-5).

therefore, space cannot be severed from the 'coloured and hard atoms', and indeed consists of nothing else, the idea of empty space, the vacuum, is a fiction (*Treat. U.*, pp. 358-68).

These atoms or points can have no extension, for our idea of extension consists of parts, but these points are simple and indivisible, only perceptible by two other properties, colour and solidity (cf. *Treat. U.*, pp. 344-5).<sup>1</sup> These indivisible points, of which space is composed, are then the very geometrical points which are defined as being without depth, length, and breadth. For how should the human mind be able to perceive something that had no extension, unless it possessed other properties such as colour and density which might render it intelligible? That which has no properties at all is incomprehensible. Accordingly the geometrical points must be the coloured and compact points or atoms, of which space in Hume's opinion is composed (*Treat. U.*, p. 348). Now if we could count up these points, geometry would be an exact science. We might then determine with complete precision how much larger one line or area was than another line or area, for we should only have to add up their points (*Treat. U.*, p. 351). Geometry would then possess that same perfect standard of measure as arithmetic, viz. counting; geometry in other words would become arithmetic. But as this enumeration is not possible because the geometrical points lack extension, geometry is not an exact science. But, as we have previously seen, Hume does not deny the *certainty* of the geometrical judgements. We may say with certainty, for instance, this line is longer than that. But we cannot say *by how many points* it is longer. We must emphasize this distinction of Hume's between *certainty and exactness*, as it is to be of decisive importance in drawing the comparison with Hume's attitude to mathematics in his Essays. It needs no demonstra-

<sup>1</sup> Anton Thomsen in his book, *David Hume*, Copenhagen, 1911, i. 209, has questioned whether Hume himself regarded these particular points as being non-extended. In a paper on Hume's philosophy in the Treatise and the Essays, 1902, I pointed out that Hume undoubtedly meant that the indivisible points had no extension, and referred to his own utterances in the Treatise, pp. 344-5. And Edgar Rubin has quite independently come to the same conclusion which he has substantiated at great length, referring rightly also to the passages in the Treatise on pp. 513 and 346, Edgar Rubin, *Synsoplevede Figurer* (Figures experienced by Sight), 1915, pp. 212 et seqq.



tion that the aforesaid points are indivisible; divisibility requires extension. Hume contests the infinite indivisibility of space also in other ways (cf. *Treat. U.*, Part II, sects. i and ii).

Hume's views on geometry are very curious; but in a sense he has been in advance of his time, in this as in so many other respects. The difficulties of geometry from the point of view of the theory of knowledge, which Hume has touched upon, are indeed—even if the particular form in which he drew up the problem for geometry is not accepted—fully acknowledged by that school of modern geometry which is called real geometry or natural geometry, *v.* the interesting and thought-inspiring presentation of the views of this school by J. Hjelmslev in his paper: 'Die natürliche Geometrie', *Hamburger mathematische Einzelschriften*, 1933, i. 1-36, and the same author: 'Om den rette Linjes Bestemmelse ved to Punkter' (Concerning the true determination of the straight line by two points) in *Det kgl. Danske Videnskabernes Selskabs Forhandlinger* (Minutes of the Royal Danish Society of Sciences), 1916.

We have now traversed the chain of reasoning which lead Hume from his general psychological propositions to his denial of the exactness of geometry, and we have hereby seen how unerringly Hume in his *Treatise* stands by his starting-point, even in the most minute details. We have perceived the magnitude of this work, even in its errors, for it is great by its consistency.

Having thus treated space and time in the first special part and the causal relation in the second, Hume finally, in the third special part (*Treat. U.*, Part IV), examines the two conceptions of mind and matter. Here again Hume carries his psychology to its extreme consequences, even though it involves a conflict with ordinary common sense. Not only the intellectual constructions of the speculative philosophers are based on these two conceptions, for if we remove the many artificial words there still remains a distinction between an internal spiritual world of the mind and an external material world, which is recognized by all ordinary mortals, and on which their daily life is founded. But Hume cannot at all recognize a distinction of this kind on the basis of his own propositions. If he asks his well-known question: From what impressions are our ideas of mind and matter

30 COMPARISON OF HUME'S THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE IN  
derived? there is no answer. Consequently he declares these two conceptions to be fictions, and a distinction between the two worlds to be pure imagination (*Treat. U.*, Part IV, sects. ii and v). Hume employs the term fiction as a general description of all the ideas for which no corresponding impression can be found. Empty time, empty space, the exactness of geometry, mind, and matter, &c., they are all fictions.

The theory of knowledge contained in the *Treatise*, therefore, stands as a coherent whole. Not only formally, systematically, does it present itself as a unity, but between the most varied thoughts which it contains there is an internal real connexion, the strongest imaginable, that of logic, for however varied the reasonings may be in the special parts, yet they all issue from the common nucleus, viz. the psychology of the general part.

This consistent, scientific, systematic method and the equally consistent logic are not, however, the only major virtues of the *Treatise*. One more may be mentioned: thoroughness and penetration in the psychological analysis. Here we do not, of course, contemplate his general psychological theory concerning the relation between impressions and ideas, for serious objections may certainly be raised against that. Moreover, it was no original theory of his own, but was formed through the study of Locke and Berkeley. But we think of his own special psychological analyses, particularly the most original of his inquiries, viz. that of the causal relation, in the *Treatise*, Book I, Part III. This third virtue will be all the more appreciated when we compare it with what the *Essays* contain in this respect.

Before we leave the theory of knowledge in the *Treatise*, however, we must consider what has been called its scepticism. This refers in particular to the sceptical results concerning the perception of nature at which Hume, as mentioned above, arrived in the second and third of his special parts. It is, however, by no means possible to characterize Hume's theory of human understanding on the basis of these sceptical results. We cannot regard them as isolated conclusions, but must examine the source from which they are derived. x

Hume's particular view on the theory of knowledge is no more sceptical than his general philosophical standpoint, the maintenance of the Socratic principle. The foundation of his entire

theory of knowledge is, as we have seen, experience of the most positive nature. He holds that the impressions, the senses, are the only source of our knowledge, and that accordingly any idea must justify its existence by proving to correspond to our purely sensual experience. By radically applying this measure to all our ideas Hume intended to destroy for ever all word-philosophy and speculation. But unwittingly he overstepped the mark, for he soon discovered to his astonishment that it was not only logomachy and speculation which exceeded experience, the perceptions of the senses, but that even ordinary common sense was guilty of going beyond experience. Every one concluded from cause to effect, and yet this conclusion was beyond experience. Everybody believed that our sensations were due to something outside ourselves, a material world, but Hume had to agree with Berkeley that this belief could be neither justified nor proved.

Hume's surprise that his own positive principle of experience could lead to such sceptical results may be clearly seen in the closing chapter of his theory of knowledge in the *Treatise*. Here we do not find, as we might reasonably expect, a short summary of the results of his theory of human understanding, but an almost poetical description of the *mood* which especially the sceptical results have evoked. This mood reveals exactly what the starting-points of his philosophy reveal, that Hume was not by natural inclination a sceptic. Here he utters words which are not inspired by his logic but by his sentiments.

He depicts in the most striking colours and by the most vivid images his sadness, nay his despair, that self-knowledge has only taught him in all places to realize the weakness and powerlessness of the human mind. He shows how this sceptical comprehension has created in himself an inner conflict between his theory and practice, which is in every way intolerable (*Treat. U.*, pp. 546-9). In everyday practical life he has, like all others, absolute faith in ordinary common sense. But in his theory of human understanding he questions all that it says. He feels himself reduced to a state of 'philosophical melancholy and delirium' (*Treat. U.*, p. 548) from which he can find relief only in society and other intercourse with human beings.

Notwithstanding all this inner conflict and doubt, Hume

ultimately finds consolation; and this comfort is characteristic, for it reveals him as the same positive empirical philosopher as he was at the beginning of the *Treatise*, for he will rather give up his faith in the tenability of his own results than his belief in the ability of the human mind to achieve true understanding. He is indeed comforted by the thought that self-knowledge is still so young and unexplored a science that he can only expect his own results to be most probably highly imperfect. The future development of the study of self-knowledge will certainly eliminate the doubt which he himself cannot overcome: 'Two thousand years with such long interruptions, and under such mighty discouragements, are a small space of time to give any tolerable perfection to the sciences; and perhaps we are still in too early an age of the world to discover any principles, which will bear the examination of the latest posterity' (*Treat. U.*, p. 552). These words contain a fine criticism of himself. Hume places himself, as it were, outside his own scepticism and judges it freely and impartially. He seems to suspect that quite probably it may be a fairly irrelevant result of his own deficient knowledge of the nature of our mind, of the psychology of our reason, and that consequently it may not be of lasting importance.

As a consequence of this self-criticism Hume becomes very modest; he is, so to speak, sceptical about his own scepticism: 'A true sceptic will be diffident of his sceptical doubts', and he desires that his assertions should not be taken too dogmatically. There is a dogmatic scepticism as well as a dogmatic faith, and Hume will listen to neither (cf. *Treat. U.*, pp. 552-3).

A further reason for Hume to regard his sceptical results with some detachment is the genuine English view, that after all they can have no influence on everyday practical life (*Treat. U.*, p. 548). Surely man will never cease to believe in an external world distinct from that of the mind, or doubt that the sun will rise to-morrow. But when philosophy arrives at conclusions which can have no influence on practical life, this is to an Englishman synonymous with their being useless. To a German of the romantic period this would undoubtedly mean the opposite. As a practical Englishman Hume feels lonely with these results. He hardly dares to tell them to any one, for people will regard him as demented.

In this closing chapter we therefore meet the spontaneous reaction of Hume's positive and practical mind against this scepticism which is so far removed from ordinary human life, and in which the theory of knowledge of the *Treatise* had concluded. Hume's consistent logic was on the same side as this scepticism, which his sound common sense opposed.

Hume never really found his way out of this dilemma. We shall meet it again in the theory of knowledge in the *Essays*. But in accordance with his common sense and true reasons of popularization he merely left out those sceptical results which most offended ordinary human reason, viz. the denial of the conceptions of mind and matter, in other words the distinction between an external and an internal world. But the root, the source, of these results he left unchanged. And, as we have seen, this source was his general psychological propositions. From these all the arguments of his *Treatise* were derived, his entire theory of knowledge was a mere deduction from them. If Hume had really wanted to overcome this dilemma, he must have realized that because the logic of the *Treatise* was indisputable, it was by no means certain that its results were unchallengeable. Now in the closing chapter we only find a suggestion to this effect. But this suggestion never developed into clearly conscious thought. If it had it would have contained the germs of an entirely new departure in his philosophy. But as we shall presently see from the examination of the theory of knowledge in the *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, Hume never progressed beyond these propositions. Therefore, as our introductory examination of the *Treatise* showed, he began and ended his philosophy in the theory of understanding. What he produced in the *Enquiry* was merely a popular excerpt. Everywhere it shows stagnation, no progress or development.

## THE THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE ESSAYS

(ENQUIRY CONCERNING HUMAN UNDERSTANDING)

ONCE the reader has become familiar with the thoughts laid down in the theory of knowledge in the *Treatise*, once he has perceived the inner cohesion of this work, although it covers the most varied subjects within the theory of human understanding and extends to practically all the problems of this science, once he has learned to admire its numerous delicate psychological studies and its equally numerous and equally logical conclusions, briefly speaking when he has seen that in spite of its one-sidedness it stands out as a singularly harmonious work, one of the most profound and thorough in the history of philosophy, as I have only vaguely shown in the previous chapters, he will be sadly disappointed on behalf of science on reading next the *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, and he may well cry out: Alas, how changed!

Everywhere in this work the view is sadly corroborated which, as a result of our inquiry in the introduction, we had to regard as the true explanation of the relation between the *Treatise* and the *Essays*, and which we expressed as follows: The philosophy of the *Essays* is a compromise between the philosophy of the *Treatise* and the habitual thoughts, feelings, and taste of the public. Everywhere in the *Enquiry* we see that reasons of popularization have had the effect of obliterating the most characteristic features of the theory of knowledge as expounded in the *Treatise*.

Now, as we have seen in the introduction (p. 7 et seq.), these considerations required two sacrifices: an abbreviation and the surrender of all systematic arrangement. Both were requisites of the essay form, and the *Enquiry* was originally a whole series of essays.

Just as Hume in his *Essays* gave up the systematic plan which linked up the three books of the *Treatise*, and changed each of them into a separate essay, so he abandoned in the first book, the theory of human understanding, the entire systematic scheme which united the four parts. In the *Enquiry* he omitted indeed

the two special parts concerning space and time, and concerning mind and matter, and co-ordinated the remainder, the general part and the two special parts concerning the causal relation into one inquiry. In this way he also achieved a considerable abbreviation. Only half of the theory of knowledge was transferred from the Treatise.

But not even the two parts that were found worthy of vulgarization got through intact. They were vigorously abridged. From the general part only the ordinary psychological propositions which were necessary to explain the examination of the causal relation (a total of 7 out of the 22 pages of the Treatise, *Enq. U.*, pp. 13-19) were included, and even this inquiry which covers some 100 pages in the Treatise was condensed to 46 pages (*Enq. U.*, pp. 20-65). As a result of this reduction Hume was able to add a few more entertaining and generally intelligible inquiries, such as: 'Of Miracles' and 'Of a Particular Providence and of a Future State'. Questions of religion are, indeed, always likely to interest the ordinary reader; and in the Essays Hume kept a keen eye on these interests. In spite of these supplements the Enquiry did not swell to any fatiguing extent. It covers only 135 pages, whilst Book I of the Treatise numbered 250.

By these numerous abbreviations it was, of course, particularly the many individual studies of the Treatise that suffered. All the subtle and delicate psychological analyses which we meet especially in the chapters of this work on the causal relation (Part III) were, of course, eliminated when the text had to be reduced from 100 to 46 pages. Only the results of the analysis could be transferred, not the actual analysis itself. The examinations of the conceptions of time and space, of mind and matter, were, as we have seen, entirely omitted. Here and there in the Enquiry we find a few desultory observations on these subjects. Apart from these observations and the interspersed chapters, the Enquiry, therefore, merely contains a much abridged account of Hume's theory of causation as expounded in the Treatise.

The rendering in the Enquiry is, as pointed out in the introduction, as easy and entertaining as in the political essays. All the scientific terms and subdivisions of the Treatise have, as we

shall subsequently see, been avoided as much as possible in order not to weary the reader. Hume has actually achieved his desire of becoming both practical and sociable. We feel that after the publication of the *Treatise* he has gone through the school of Addison and the other contributors to weeklies, and that in the composition of the political essays he has gained experience. His own account in the *Enquiry* of the two kinds of philosophy is perfectly adapted to the *Treatise* and the *Enquiry*. The former is 'abstruse and accurate', the latter 'the obvious and easy philosophy'.

From a formal point of view, therefore, a great change has taken place in Hume's theory of knowledge. But the real naked standpoint of the *Enquiry* is identical with that of the *Treatise*.<sup>1</sup>

In the first place the psychological propositions are the same, and, as I have endeavoured to show in the foregoing, the close connexion between Hume's theory of knowledge and his psychology supplies the best proof that the *Enquiry* does not on any single point signify progress or indicate any development of Hume's thought from the theory of knowledge laid down in the *Treatise*. If we accept the premisses of the latter, we must also acknowledge its conclusions, and the views of the *Treatise* on space and time and on mind and matter were as necessary consequences as its views on the causal relation. Actually this only means that Hume transcribed the latter and not the others. The *Treatise* had to be abridged, some parts had to be omitted, but why these parts were to be those dealing with space and time, mind and matter, we shall presently see.

The psychological propositions of the *Treatise* were its subdivision of all mental phenomena into impressions and ideas, the latter being copies of the former. Just the same division is found in the *Enquiry* (*Enq. U.*, pp. 13, 14, &c.). In the *Treatise* the impressions were again divided into impressions of sensation and impressions of reflection. This distinction is not so clearly expressed by the same terms in the *Enquiry*, but this is probably only due to the fact that in this work Hume did not want to trouble his readers with more learned distinctions than necessary. No real change has taken place, for as instances of what he

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also J. Ziemels, *David Humes Lehre vom Glauben*, Berlin, 1903, pp. 6 and 71.



means by 'impressions' he enumerates (*Enq. U.*, p. 14) 'the more lively perceptions, when we hear, or see, or feel, or love, or hate, or will',<sup>1</sup> which shows that by impressions he means exactly the same as in the *Treatise*. Moreover, in the course of his inquiry he does in fact distinguish between inward and outward impressions, or feelings and sensations (*Enq. U.*, pp. 15, 17, 52, &c.), but omits to emphasize this distinction at the beginning of the inquiry because it is so obvious and straightforward. We notice that the terms inward and outward to describe feelings and sensations are employed as more simple illustrations than the artificial terminology impressions of reflection and of sensation.<sup>2</sup> The relation between impressions and ideas is described also in the *Enquiry* by the latter being derived or copied from the former (*Enq. U.*, pp. 14, 15, &c.). On these psychological propositions, therefore, Hume in the same way as in the *Treatise* bases his principle of knowledge: that no idea is valid unless it is derived from an impression or a compound of impressions (*Enq. U.*, pp. 14, 52, &c.). When Hume says at the conclusion of his studies in the *Enquiry* that this or that idea is derived from an inward impression, a sentiment, a feeling, the ordinary reader is, of course, immediately aware that we are considering a purely subjective idea.

From his criterion of verity, the sensations, Hume, therefore, in the first place, as in the *Treatise*, criticizes the speculative school of philosophy. He complains of the uncertainty of the philosophical sciences which he regards as a result of the obscurity and equivocation of the metaphysical sciences (*Enq. U.*, p. 51).

It is significant, however, that in directing in the *Enquiry* his

<sup>1</sup> In the *Treatise* Hume also includes actions of the will under impressions (*Treat. P.*, p. 181).

<sup>2</sup> Grimm wonders (p. 575) why Hume does not in the *Enquiry* place the inward impressions, the feelings, in a position of dependence on the external sensations. There are, however, no grounds for surprise. Where Hume does not positively stress this division but merely takes it for granted when he needs it, there is no reason whatever for him to correlate inward and outward impressions, particularly as this is quite unnecessary for the explanation of the causal inquiry. And Hume only included in the *Enquiry* what he was absolutely forced to. We might just as well wonder why all the other details of the introductory psychology of the *Treatise* were not transferred to the *Enquiry*, and that 22 pages of the former became 7 in the latter. The same observations apply to Grimm's other questions and suppositions on p. 575.

criticism against the speculative philosophy, Hume does not single out the conceptions of Spinoza, but preferably those of the Occasionalists (*Enq. U.*, pp. 57-60), though, as we have seen above, he criticizes both in his *Treatise*. This again shows subservience to the readers he addresses. The very Latin terminology of Spinoza, *substantia*, *attributum*, *modus*, &c., would frighten Hume from critical contest in the popular work, the more so because the relation between these conceptions was none too simple to explain to ordinary mortals. Moreover, Hume would then have to enter into a criticism of the conceptions of mind and matter, and this was what he wanted to avoid in the *Enquiry*. The theological views of the Occasionalists were altogether more generally interesting and comprehensible than the serene pantheism of Spinoza, and, moreover, their most important speculations were on Hume's principal subject, the causal relation. They operated with such conceptions as power, energy, occasional cause, and God as the all-moving cause.

In the same way as in the *Treatise* Hume explodes their philosophical constructions by asking his usual question: From which impressions are such conceptions as power, energy, activity, &c., derived? These conceptions he would interpret for his readers, because they are among 'the most obscure and uncertain in metaphysics' (*Enq. U.*, p. 51). But as in the *Treatise* his explanation takes the form of annihilation (*Treat. U.*, Part III, sect. xiv). He looks upon all these terms, power, energy, activity, necessity, &c., as merely variations of the same idea, viz. that of the necessary connexion of cause and effect. And then, as in the *Treatise*, he must conclude that this idea is purely subjective, derived from an inward *feeling*, not from a *perception through the senses*. Thus, while determining the result of his causal inquiry, he shows at the same time that all the speculations of the Occasionalists are pure imagination, based on feelings.

Against these continental philosophers, who operate so confidently with the conception of power, Hume in his *Enquiry* also pleads Newton. For the latter was more moderate in his use of the term power, as he did not in the least believe himself to have explained the ordinary attraction of bodies by offering his fellow beings an empty and nondescript word like force of

attraction (*Enq. U.*, p. 60, note 2). Newton's preference for explaining attraction by assuming a flow of molecules rather than as a force was a great point in favour of Hume's theory of knowledge, for this satisfied the pure sense-perception far more than the completely incomprehensible conception of power; after all, there is a possibility of perceiving a flow, but not a force or power.<sup>1</sup>

Hume's psychological propositions, his criterion of reality, and his attitude towards the speculative philosophy, therefore, are not altered in the *Enquiry*. But at the same time we have seen how he made every possible concession to his readers in his choice of terminology, his mode of expression, his omissions, and his choice of material.<sup>2</sup>

But when the criterion of reality is identical in both works it is not surprising that the inquiry on the causal relation also follows the same lines. We have already seen that the result of this inquiry, viz. that the idea of necessary connexion was derived from a feeling and not from a sensation, was the same in the *Enquiry* as in the *Treatise*. But so is the starting-point and the whole course of the examination.

In the *Treatise* (Part III) Hume begins by enumerating the circumstances in which our ideas may be interrelated (*Treat. U.*, p. 372). They may be related in space and time, resemblance and contrariety, and as cause and effect. Among these relations of ideas only the logical and mathematical relations of equality give us certain knowledge, the others, for instance the causal relation, only probability.

The actual long enumeration of these relations of ideas which we find in the *Treatise* has, of course, been omitted in the

<sup>1</sup> In the same way it is a triumph for Hume's philosophy that modern physics refuses to determine fundamental phenomena such as heat and electricity as forces of nature, which means nothing, but prefers to explain them as movements within matter (movements of molecules, electrons or ions).

<sup>2</sup> In his examination of Hume's theory of belief J. Ziemels, op. cit., pp. 80-1, points to the vacillation in the definition of this conception, of which already the *Treatise* bears witness, and tries to explain certain omissions in the *Enquiry* as evidence of a change of views on belief. An obscurity on this psychological detail—which does not influence the main view on the causal relation—may possibly explain the omission. In a new edition it would be natural to omit a point that does not seem quite clear, or with which the author is no longer quite satisfied himself.

Enquiry<sup>1</sup> in the same way as Hume omitted the aforesaid psychological subdivisions. But the real thought at the back of this enumeration, viz. the distinction between the two kinds of human knowledge, the certain formal knowledge, and the uncertain real knowledge or experience, is found just as clearly and definitely expressed in the Enquiry. It is quite natural that in this connexion he has only emphasized mathematical knowledge, as its propositions were the best known and most instructive.<sup>2</sup>

In the Enquiry he gives a striking illustration of the difference between the two kinds of knowledge by contrasting the following two axioms: The square of the hypotenuse is equivalent to the sum of the squares of the sides, and: The sun will rise to-morrow. The former is a *certain*, logical conclusion (notice that Hume persistently uses the terms *certainly*, *certain*, and not exactness, exact, cf. *Enq. U.*, pp. 20-2), the latter, on the other hand, is only an inference of experience from past to future, of which we have no proof. Hume then goes on, in the same way as in the Treatise, to prove this assertion by showing that our idea of the necessary connexion of cause and effect originates from a feeling derived from a repetition of numerous similar instances, which imparts to us a faith that the future will be like the past (cf. especially *Enq. U.*, sect. iv, Parts I and II, and *Treat. U.*, Part III, sects. ii-iv).

The real naked standpoint of Hume's main inquiry is therefore the same in either work. But if we make an estimate of their quality, what a difference! This difference is perhaps most striking in the examination of the nature of the causal belief (*Treat. U.*, sects. vii-x, and *Enq. U.*, sect. v, Part II). At this point of the Treatise we meet a unique thoroughness and delicacy of psychological analysis, a brilliant skill in distinguishing all the threads of sensation, memory, and imagination from which is woven that strong mental tissue which we call habit,

<sup>1</sup> Resemblance, identity, relations of time and place, proportions in quantity or number, degrees in any quality, contrariety, and causation.

<sup>2</sup> I am, therefore, quite unable to regard this innocent omission of the table of relations as evidence of any change in Hume's principles, as Grimm does, pp. 576-7. Grimm's criticism on this point is, of course, quite correct, but it is as unprovable as improbable that Hume himself should have been aware of the contradiction, which Grimm detects, for in that case Hume would have realized the one-sidedness of his psychological propositions.

or rather the belief derived from habit. We almost behold our causal belief, that powerful implement of our mind, which 'peoples the world, and brings us acquainted with such existences, as by their removal in time and place, lie beyond the reach of the senses and memory. By means of it I paint the universe in my imagination, and fix my attention on any part of it I please.' This perfect Aladdin's lamp is by Hume's words made to shine out of the depths of our unconscious mental existence, and he is the first in the history of philosophy to fetch this torch out of the abyss.

Even in the small section which has no parallel in the *Enquiry*, viz. 'Of Unphilosophical Probability', which is only, as it were, an interlude in the comprehensive study, we find an interesting treatment of the psychology of prejudices, in which it is clearly shown that a prejudice is due to a too rapid generalization, and that accordingly it must be regarded as an unphilosophical probability. We recall the famous saying of Novalis that philosophy is dephlegmatization. Hume's philosophy is a good illustration. The *Treatise* has dephlegmatized us in our prejudices, even in the greatest of all, our blind belief in causation.

The *Treatise*, therefore, is not only quantitatively Hume's principal work, as it is only there that we find a complete and coherent account of all Hume's views on the theory of knowledge, whilst the *Enquiry* gives us only a fragment, but also from a qualitative point of view the *Treatise* rises far above the *Enquiry*.

The question now remains why Hume transferred from the *Treatise* to the *Enquiry* that particular fragment which dealt with the causal relation or, in other words, why he omitted particularly the examination of time and space and of mind and matter. The answer is not difficult. Having seen both in the study of the essays generally in the introductory chapter, and now from the examination of the contents of the *Enquiry*, so many examples of Hume's great deference to the taste and thoughts of the public, it is no wonder that in his choice of subject-matter also he was influenced by a similar consideration.

Now, in the first place, it is quite easy to understand why Hume omitted Part II concerning time and space. This part is without comparison the most abstract of all, and to the ordinary reader without philosophical training the least interesting and

most unintelligible part of the *Treatise*. The greater portion of this part deals with the fundamental principles of mathematics, and the composition is, as we saw above in the theory of knowledge of the *Treatise*, practically speaking one long series of inferences, by which Hume carries us from his starting-point, the sensations, right down to the inaccuracies of geometry. Burton, therefore, rightly describes Hume's mathematical views as 'a reasoning of a highly subtle order' (Burton, Book I, p. 74).

Hume would therefore have been very simple-minded if he had believed that his subtle mathematical reasonings might interest the reading public. Moreover, a critique of geometry, an essential part of our formal knowledge, placed immediately before the inquiry into causation, where uncertain experience is sharply contrasted with certain mathematical knowledge, would have entirely disconcerted the ordinary reader, who might find it none too easy to grasp Hume's distinction between the certainty and the exactness of geometry.

From the point of view of vulgarization, therefore, Hume was right in omitting Part II of the *Treatise*. But he was at least equally wise in leaving out the third special part concerning mind and matter. A demonstration of the purely fictitious nature of these two conceptions, which were among the most established and traditional to the ordinary mind, could not possibly make Hume popular. If Hume had reproduced this research, by which the substance of the soul is reduced to naught, the general opinion would immediately have declared him an atheist, which according to contemporary views meant a thoroughly depraved and immoral person.

Further, we saw in the closing chapter of the *Treatise* how isolated Hume felt with these opinions. His sound practical sense told him that they would never exercise any influence on the lives of his fellow men. What would be the use then of accounting for them? The failure of the *Treatise* was to him a further lesson in the futility thereof. We also saw in the closing chapter that Hume himself was not quite confident about these extreme, sceptical results. He was susceptible to the possibility that they might be due to his own deficient knowledge of the nature of our mind.

Hume's own practical common sense and reasons of vulgariza-

tion, therefore, produced the same effect, viz. the omission of the third special part.

Hume's examination of the causal relation was, indeed, also sceptical, but this scepticism, which only asserted that our conclusion from cause to effect was not a logical conclusion but an empirical inference from past to future, was nothing compared with that which denied the distinction between an inward and an outward world. In the *Enquiry* Hume himself calls the former scepticism 'good and mitigated', and it may at any rate be of some use in furthering intellectual modesty, whilst the latter is termed 'excessive' and quite useless (*Enq. U.*, pp. 130-3).

A further reason that contributed to the selection of the causal inquiry of the *Treatise* as the subject-matter of the *Enquiry* was, of course, the fact that this was Hume's most original research work. Space and material substance had already been examined by Berkeley, who had expressed the verdict that they were vacant abstractions. It is true that Hume's annihilation of the conception of spiritual substance was also original; Berkeley—the bishop—had quite unconsciously avoided this subject. But, as I have pointed out, this discovery of Hume's was not particularly suited to advance his popularity.

Accordingly we cannot be surprised that the *Enquiry* was formed from this particular fragment of the *Treatise*. On the contrary, if it had been different it would have contradicted our entire knowledge of Hume's character.

Nevertheless, these omissions have been interpreted as an abandonment of the views expressed in the *Treatise*. On some points no positive proof has been offered for the simple reason that the account in the *Enquiry* gives no clue.<sup>1</sup> On other points, where the *Enquiry* contains scattered observations on the subjects omitted, proofs have been sought in these remarks.

Thus, it has been asserted that Hume's attitude to mathematics was different in the *Enquiry* from what it was in the *Treatise*, because in the former he places geometry and arithmetic on the same level and says that both give intuitively and demonstratively certain knowledge, whereas nowhere in the *Enquiry* is the

<sup>1</sup> Grimm, pp. 579-83.

difference suggested, which is so strongly emphasized in the Treatise in respect of accuracy.<sup>1</sup>

This observation is, however, as I have pointed out above, by no means conclusive. For it entirely fails to consider the above-mentioned distinction between exactness and certainty which Hume constantly stresses in the Treatise, where he admits the demonstrative certainty of geometry as well as of arithmetic. Moreover, it is overlooked that in the Enquiry Hume constantly uses the terms 'certain', 'certainty', but nowhere 'exactness', although if Hume had changed his mind, there would be every reason for him to stress exactness together with certainty as the characteristic qualities of mathematical knowledge. The only possible explanation of this omission is that Hume still reserved his particular attitude to geometry, an attitude which for the reasons already given he would not deal with in the Enquiry.<sup>2</sup> The notes to page 129 of the Enquiry clearly show that he still held the same views on this point.

<sup>1</sup> Grimm, pp. 481-3, 578.

<sup>2</sup> When I advanced the view for the first time (1902) that in Hume's attitude to geometry we must distinguish clearly between *certainty* and *exactness*, and that we should then discover that there was not on this point either any difference between the views of the Essays and of the Treatise, this occasioned a note in Hoffding, *Filosofiens Historie*, Copenhagen, 1903, i. 434, where he accepts my views on this distinction in the Treatise. But the remainder of the contents of this note appears to show that Hoffding did not, after all, fully understand the point.

Cassirer, in his brilliant work *Das Erkenntnisproblem*, vol. 2, 2nd ed., 1911, pp. 345-6, appears to believe that in the *Enquiry*, sect. iv, Part I, Hume has changed his account from the Treatise on another point of the problem of mathematical knowledge, and says: 'Zwar gibt Hume selbst in der späteren Fassung, die seine Lehre im Enquiry enthält, eine wesentliche Einschränkung seiner ursprünglichen Darstellung. Der Erkenntnis von Tatsachen, die nur zur Erfahrung und Gewöhnung erreicht werden kann, werden nunmehr die reinen Relationen zwischen Ideen gegenübergestellt, die kraft der blossen Operation des Denkens entdeckt werden können, ohne von irgendetwas, was im Universum existiert, abhängig zu sein. Diese Trennung indessen mochte in Lockes Essay, dem Hume sie entlehnt, ihren Sinn und ihr gutes Recht haben; für ihn selber ist sie sachlich hinfällig geworden und bedeutet nur ein ungerechtfertigtes Zugeständnis an die traditionelle Anschauung.' I cannot agree that there is any such contrast between the account in the Treatise and in the Essays. In reality Hume maintains already in the Treatise, in agreement with Locke, that there is a clear difference between our uncertain knowledge based on experience, and the knowledge which is 'depending solely upon ideas' and consequently independent of the events of the universe, and which therefore gives us that *certainty* which our experience of the world can never give us (see Hume, i. 372-3).



They also plainly prove that Hume had not in the least changed his mind on the question of the infinite divisibility of space (see also Hume's *Letters to Strahan*, p. 230).

It has also been held that in the *Enquiry* Hume had changed his views on scepticism, that his doubt about the abilities of the mind had diminished since the *Treatise*.<sup>1</sup> Here, however, we must bear in mind the curious fact, to which I referred above in my account of the theory of knowledge of the *Treatise*, that in this work Hume not only gave a theoretical survey of his sceptical results, but also showed us in the closing chapter what was his practical opinion of them. His attitude is briefly this: Theoretically, logically he must admit that they are correct, but he realized that in practice they were of no importance. He clearly disclosed his dilemma which he expressed so strikingly by the words nature and principle. Nature, i.e. his own common sense, makes him believe that there is a world around him, and many other things, whilst principle, i.e. the theory of knowledge of the *Treatise*, produces the opposite effect in him. In this struggle, however, nature must ultimately prevail over principle (*Treat. U.*, pp. 548-50).

But the very same vacillation between theory and practice is repeated in the *Enquiry*. Here it is admitted (pp. 125-8) that in theory scepticism is irrefutable. Logic is on its side. But at the same time it is asserted that the essential practical objection may be raised that it confers no useful benefit on society. The same contrast between 'nature' and 'principle', which was so strongly emphasized in the *Treatise*, is here expressed by the apt phrase: Nature is always too strong for principle (*Enq. U.*, p. 131). In the *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* there is an interesting passage which reveals the same aspect. Referring to the sceptics who deny validity to the moral distinctions, Hume says: 'it were well if, in the abstruser studies of logic and metaphysics, we could as easily obviate the cavils of that sect, as in the practical and more intelligible sciences of politics and morals' (*Enq. M.*, p. 203). Here we find the same admission of the theoretical truth of scepticism from the point of view of the theory of knowledge, and also the same complaint as in the closing chapter of the *Treatise*.

<sup>1</sup> Grimm, pp. 569-71, 583-4.

The desultory observations do not, therefore, in any way tend to show that Hume had changed his views on the subjects omitted; on the contrary, they prove in plain words that this was not the case.

As regards an omission such as that of the substance of the soul, particularly the chapter on personal identity in the *Treatise*, which is not positively mentioned in the *Enquiry*, Grimm's view (pp. 579–83) need not, of course, be wrong merely because it lacks proof, unless special reasons may be advanced to contest it. But this special reason seems to lie in the fact that this omission, as we have seen above, harmonized very well with sensible considerations of the habitual feelings and thoughts of the ordinary reader.

In conclusion I shall merely point out what I tried to prove in the account of the theory of knowledge of the *Treatise*, that the fact that the psychological propositions of the *Enquiry* and the *Treatise* are identical must be regarded as final and conclusive proof that the *Enquiry* does not generally on any point mark any progress beyond the philosophy of the *Treatise*. These propositions may be compared to the radius of a circle. Hume's theory of knowledge is the circle drawn by that radius. In the *Treatise* we see the whole circle, in the *Enquiry* only a sector. Consequently it means nothing to Hume's theory of knowledge that shortly before his death he denounced the *Treatise* and wanted the *Enquiry* to replace it. For if we consider the propositions of the *Enquiry* also in relation to the other problems, with which it does not deal, we must of logical necessity arrive at all the results of the *Treatise*. If we have seen the sector, we may therefore reconstruct the whole circle, for it will embrace the extreme sceptical results and the mathematical views as well as Hume's theory of causation.

I cannot, therefore, adhere to the view expressed by Grimm at the conclusion of his inquiry, as follows: 'Auf jedem Fall enthält die zweite Schrift (i.e. *Enq. U.*) diejenigen Punkte, welche Hume dauernd festzuhalten gedachte. Er konnte mit Recht verlangen, dass, wer ihn angreifen wollte, ihn auf den Inhalt dieser Schrift hin angriffe, und nicht auf dasjenige hin, was er selbst fallen gelassen hatte' (the second work—i.e. *Enq. U.*—contains at any rate those points which Hume intended to

adhere to permanently. He might rightly claim that those who would attack him did so on the contents of this work, and not on what he had abandoned himself). But this was precisely what Hume was not entitled to claim. For he must be responsible for any consequence of the psychological starting-point which was the foundation both of the *Treatise* and of the *Enquiry*. This starting-point is like a hydra, some of whose heads look worse than others. It will not help Hume that in the *Enquiry* he cut off some of the most hideous heads. They will grow again when we know their origin. It is, therefore, the *Treatise*, and the *Treatise* only, which should be the object of the criticism of posterity.

# COMPARISON OF HUME'S ETHICS IN THE TREATISE AND IN THE ESSAYS

## ETHICS OF THE TREATISE

**H**UME fully kept the promise he made by identifying himself with the motto of Socrates. The entire contents of the Treatise are psychology and a theory of knowledge based thereon. Book I deals with man's ideas, Books II and III with man's emotions and sensations. In Book II we thus find a searching inquiry of emotions generally, in Book III the aesthetical feelings are made the subject of a special study. It is therefore quite natural to regard the psychology of the feelings in Book II as the introduction to Hume's ethics.

This psychology is of the same valuable quality that we met in the psychology of knowledge in the Treatise, viz. thoroughness and subtlety in analysis. This quality is here revealed by the conscientiousness with which Hume in dealing with any feeling accounts for all the ideas, even the smallest elements, which we find incorporated therein. On the whole, the point on which Hume's treatment of the psychology of the feelings deserves probably the greatest credit is his strong emphasis of the fact that it is the ideas in their innumerable different connexions and relations which everywhere provide colour for the feelings and imbue the particular feeling with its characteristic quality. Without the continual intermingling of ideas and their mutation into new compounds our emotional life would be most monotonous and dreary and grey, or rather painted only in two colours, one light and one dark, pleasure and pain. The numerous varied shades within pleasure, joy, pride, hope, enthusiasm, &c., and the equally numerous variations of pain, sorrow, humility, fear, and despair, all this wealth of changing aspects of life would not exist at all unless our ideas were continually altered, reshaped, and overturned.

Hume thus very carefully shows us the different combinations of ideas in such general, all-powerful human feelings as pride and humility, love and hatred. These he rightly calls indirect, composite passions in contrast with such simple, direct passions as joy, sorrow, hope, and fear (*Treat. P.*, p. 77).

The complex passions are naturally treated most fully. In examining them he distinguishes between the two particularly pronounced elements related to the ideas: the object and cause of the passions. The cause in its turn may be divided into two elements: subject and quality. For instance, when I feel proud of owning a beautiful house, the idea that I am the owner is the object of the passion, the subject being the house, and the quality, beauty (*Treat. P.*, pp. 77-81). In the feelings of hatred and love, humility and pride, the causes (subjects as well as qualities) may vary indefinitely (*Treat. P.*, Part I, sects. vii-x, and Part II, sect. i), but their objects remain constant. Thus the object of pride and humility and kindred passions is always self, i.e. the individual experiencing the feeling, but in love and hatred the object is always another individual (*Treat. P.*, pp. 77-121). Consequently, as Hume's psychology knows no other difference between pride and love, humility and hatred, than the difference of object, and as therefore the individuality of the feeling is purely determined by the ideas, in this case the objects, Hume cannot really acknowledge any association between the feelings in themselves but only through the ideas as a medium, although it has been rightly pointed out that his own views on the subject appear to be somewhat vacillating, for in some passages, especially *Treat. P.*, pp. 82-3, he seems to admit this association, whilst in other places, *Treat. P.*, p. 163, he denies it. This inconsistency, however, is probably more of a formal than of a real nature. A formal inconsistency may occur by the use of the same term to denote two different things. And this is probably what Hume does in these passages in using the term impression. In the one place (*Treat. P.*, pp. 82-3) he uses the term to denote what in ordinary everyday language is called a feeling or emotion, and as instances he mentions sorrow, disappointment, anger, &c. Between these there can obviously be no association, as ideas are involved. But later, having lucidly separated these elements, Hume undoubtedly uses the term impression in the sense of pure feeling, in other words, corresponding to his own technical term impression of reflection. This terminology is indeed particularly striking on page 163, where the author denies association between pure emotions.

By his scrupulous and careful examination of the ideas Hume

also shows how extremely difficult it is to define precisely those vague internal phenomena which we call feelings or emotions. This difficulty is in reality due to the nature of the perceptions of our mind which are too coarse to grasp the imperceptible differences, the delicate shades, and far too inadequate to assimilate the richly varied manifestations of life with which we are here concerned. How much more difficult is the task of the psychologist than that of the natural scientist, whose material is always external, tangible objects. Compare for instance the botanist's definition of some plant, where the entire intellectual effort consists of an enumeration of the stamens or the seedlobes, a determination of its fertility, &c., with Hume's eager and laborious striving to comprehend the conception of pride. At first he attempts something like this definition: a sensation of pleasure produced by the idea of something agreeable associated with our own self (*Treat. P.*, pp. 83-8). He soon discovers, however, that this definition is too wide, and accordingly he has to add so many explanations and limitations (*Treat. P.*, pp. 88-92), that if we were to define pride on the basis of these, the definition would be as follows: an indirect, combined, and generally constant sensation of pleasure produced by the idea of something unusual and something frequently determined to be valuable by the opinion of our fellow beings, being clearly and consciously associated with the individual itself (cf. especially *Treat. P.*, pp. 90-1). However long and accurate a definition of this description may be, the words 'often' and 'generally' show that even a penetrating psychologist like Hume must fail in trying to determine by reason the richly varied conception which man happens to have chosen to describe by one single word: pride. And the same applies, of course, to the no less complex phenomena of humility, love, and hatred.

The characteristic feature of the psychology of the passions in the *Treatise* is not only the great thoroughness in unravelling the elements of ideas and showing their great importance to our emotional life, but also the strong emphasis of *sympathy*, of feeling with others, as one of the greatest and most remarkable forces of the human mind. Hume says: No quality of human nature is more remarkable both in itself and in its consequences than the propensity we have to sympathize with others and to

receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments (*Treat. P.*, p. 111). He then explains the nature of sympathy and shows that it is an important component of the great majority of feelings. He discovers it in different forms, such as friendship, love, esteem, compassion, love of family or country, and even in pride and humility (*Treat. P.*, pp. 111-17 and 146-57). Even in ambition he shows that sympathy is an important element (*Treat. P.*, Part I, sect. xi: 'Of the Love of Fame'); and this observation is undoubtedly correct; ambitious characters are at any rate as a rule definitely socially minded and have a pronounced sense of community and state.

By studying the element of sympathy in Hume's psychology we understand how it becomes the basis of his ethics. Here he shows that there is no single ethical virtue which is not derived from sympathy (*Treat. P.*, pp. 335-50, 358-60, and 370-1). This is a necessary consequence of his demonstration in the psychology, how this feeling formed the essential element of the greatest number and the best feelings. In pointing out in the ethics that sympathy is the cause of the social virtues such as friendship, goodwill, compassion, love, gratitude, &c., he therefore only repeats what he asserted in his psychology (*Treat. M.*, pp. 358-60). It is a new principle, however, when he applies the same point of view to the so-called individual virtues which gradually merge into mere natural abilities. For these are only of essential advantage to the individual itself; but, as Hume rightly points out, when we approve and commend such virtues as industry, perseverance, moderation, &c., and even natural abilities, whether they be moral or physical, in others, as in fact we always do, this cannot possibly be due to egotism, but must result from sympathy, as it cannot as a rule be any advantage to us that others possess these qualities (*Treat. M.*, pp. 361-70). Hume is therefore able to state as the result of his moral philosophy 'that sympathy is the chief source of moral distinction' (*Treat. M.*, p. 371-sect. vi).

But it is indeed not only on this very important point that Hume's moral philosophy is dependent on his psychology. Not only the foundation, but the entire substantiation of the moral philosophy is derived from the psychology. For before Hume is able to show that the basis of the moral distinctions is

sympathy, he must prove first that these distinctions are based on feeling and not on reason. Here again his psychology helps him. For he had not only shown how much the feelings depended on the ideas, but also how much the acts of will depended on the feelings (*Treat. P.*, Part III, sect. iii). In good harmony with this view he opens his moral philosophy by maintaining that the moral distinctions or moral valuations, which are standards of action, cannot be derived from reason alone, but must be ultimately founded on feeling (*Treat. M.*, Part I). This assertion is positively in conflict with the views of the earlier English moral philosophers, such as Clarke and Wollaston who would derive all moral conceptions from reason, and it is in harmony with the views of younger philosophers like Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, who strongly emphasized the subjective, emotional foundation of morals.

The assertion that moral distinctions are not derived from reason but from sympathy is briefly the contents of Hume's moral philosophy in the Treatise. And this moral philosophy is, so to speak, implied by his psychology.

But curiously enough, the moral philosophy is quite the smallest part of the ethics of the Treatise. The greater part of Book III deals with the philosophy of Law and of the State, whilst morals are given a most stepmotherly treatment, although the title of this book reads *Of Morals*. When we have read the first part of this book in which Hume shows that moral distinctions are not based on reason but on sentiment, we find to our surprise that in going on to examine the moral virtues individually, beginning with justice, he does not deal at all with moral justice, but with legal justice, and we are then taken through a very thorough examination of the principles of law and political science. Hume's constant reference to justice as an artificial virtue is evidently due to the fact that he continually speaks of legal justice. To moral justice he makes no reference whatever.

Hume's theory of law and politics in the Treatise is in my opinion of a very high order. He treats the fundamental principles of law with a practical sense and a lucid, sound perspicacity which make his legal philosophy profitable reading to this very day. And his views on the origin and nature of the State, of Law,



and of the Community are on practically all points astonishingly modern. In this respect, as in many others, he is ahead of his time.

In order to appreciate this we have to examine his views on the background of those that prevailed among his contemporaries. The idea which dominated the philosophy of law and politics at the time was that Law, the State, and the Community originated in a contract set up some time in the dawn of history by all the human beings who thereby became members of the community. Before the conclusion of this contract the so-called natural state existed, in which the individuals lived in isolation in a constant *bello omnium contra omnes*. This contract theory had, indeed, been predominant for many centuries, having been evolved by the great legal and political philosophers of the Renaissance, and for its period it undoubtedly, like the philosophy of the Renaissance generally, marked a considerable step forward. This theory, too, was a fruit of the young idea which, emancipated from medieval scholasticism and dogmatism, began to work independently and freely for a rational solution of the numerous problems of life. The contract theory was certainly rational, but it was too rational, for life is not as it conceived it, and was even less so in the dawn of human society than to-day. This theory, however, was not finally abandoned until the nineteenth century; not until then did both historians and jurists begin to criticize it.

The particular greatness of the theory of law and politics in the Treatise lies in the fact that at a time when the contract theory generally predominated, Hume not only breaks entirely away from this theory but even submitted it to the very criticism which caused it to be rejected in the nineteenth century. The first objection to the theory was that it is quite unhistorical. A contract of this nature had never in fact been concluded, and society was never formed in this artificial, rational way. This is identical with Hume's first objection. He frankly declares the so-called natural state, the State of Nature, to be a fiction, for by his historical and practical comprehension he realizes that man has never lived in isolation, but always in a community, from the earliest period in families (*Treat. M.*, pp. 265-6). In the next place he realizes that society was never formed by a

proper contract, not even by a mere promise, the propositions of which should have been philosophical speculations on the advantages of a social existence as compared with isolation. Savage primitive people are not much given to reflection (*Treat. M.*, pp. 259-63). Nay, society has been gradually evolved, of its own accord, beginning with the family, and Hume asserts that far from combining into larger and larger communities of their own accord, men have been forced into organized society by natural circumstances, internal as well as external. Of such circumstances Hume mentions the limited measure of the goods of Nature, and as an inner circumstance the egotism of man (*Treat. M.*, pp. 266-8). These two circumstances combine to necessitate the limited, individual right of property. But if this is to be safeguarded man must live in society, subject to definite rules protecting both the right of property and other individual goods. The synthesis of all these protective rules is Law, the Order of Law (*Treat. M.*, Part II, sect. ii), and Hume makes a particular study of those rules of law which determine or protect the right of property, mentioning as circumstances from which property may originate: occupation, prescription, accession and succession, and, finally, that which is most important in modern society, transference by consent, on which all trade and circulation of goods is based. With his usual thoroughness Hume even examines in detail the several conceptions of property law, revealing everywhere a sound and practical view; cf. especially his observations on possession (*Treat. M.*, pp. 276-7). But in order to enforce these rules of law a social power is required, a State. This leads us into Hume's theory of government. Here again Hume criticizes the contract theory. According to this the State or government must have been established either by the same contract as society or by a new one stipulating that the former state of *bellum omnium contra omnes* shall cease and that a permanent authority shall preserve law and order in the community. Against this view, too, Hume raises an historical objection, pointing out rightly that the earliest governments, constituted either by kings or chieftains, more probably originated in wars between communities, in which it was imperative to hand over the leadership to a single man, than in the war between individuals invented by the contract-philosophers

(*Treat. M.*, pp. 305-6). But the most important of all Hume's arguments against the theory is a purely legal one. If man is obliged to obey his government only because he has voluntarily promised to do so by a contract, then the foundation of all law and government is shaken, for in that case any man is entitled to repudiate the contract and become a rebel or a criminal without the government having any lawful means to prevent it. And the contract theory cannot meet this consequence by asserting that the members of the community are bound by the contract once they have entered into it. For whence might this obligation be derived? The rule that promises shall be kept is a rule of law like all others, for instance that we may not steal, commit fraud or murder, and so forth, and it only acquires binding force by being a rule of law, i.e. a rule enforced by the power of the government. Our obligation to keep our promises, as well as our obligation to obey the rules of law, is therefore derived from our obligation to obey the government. Consequently this latter obligation cannot be derived from any promise or contract (*Treat. M.*, Part II, sect. viii). Thus, Hume not only proves that the contract theory is an *historical fiction*, but also that juridically it rests on a *petitio principii*.

From this theory of government in the *Treatise* we understand how Hume politically became a Tory, and why he adhered to a Tory standpoint in his political and economic essays as well as in his *History of England*. For that variation of the contract theory which Hume combats in the well-known chapter of the *Treatise* was precisely that which John Locke employed to support the views of the Whigs. Locke and the other Whigs maintained that the government of England, the Monarchy, was founded on a contract between the King and the People. The King derived his power from the sovereignty of the people. And the people obeyed its government only because it had itself lawfully established it and promised allegiance to it; cf. *Treat. M.*, p. 307. As we shall presently see, Hume uses in his political and economic essays precisely the same arguments against the contract theory of the Whigs as in the theory of government in the *Treatise*.

Now if we ask Hume why we do obey the laws and the government, when this is not because we have promised to do so, his

reply is: Out of sympathy with the common weal (*Treat. M.*, p. 271). In this way he brings about excellent cohesion between his theory of law and politics and his moral philosophy, all our ethical obligations, even our obligation to observe the laws, being derived not from egotism, but from sympathy. The contract theory, on the other hand, attempted to explain the origin and justification of law and of the state by the self-interest or deliberate egotism of the isolated individual.

From the psychology of passions in the *Treatise*, through its moral philosophy to its theory of law and government there is, therefore, one constantly maintained idea, viz. that sympathy is not only one of the greatest but one of the noblest and best forces of the human soul. On this thought Hume's entire ethics are based. It is, as it were, the common denominator of all his ethical inquiries, in the same way as the above-mentioned psychological propositions in his studies of the theory of knowledge. The cohesion of Books II and III of the *Treatise* is, therefore, as good as in Book I.

But the unity of the *Treatise* has even been denied (cf. the authors cited by Grimm, p. 573). As we have endeavoured to show everywhere in this book, there is hardly any work of greater unity and cohesion. If our attempt has succeeded, it does not give the *Treatise* an iota more credit than its due.

## ETHICS OF THE ESSAYS

IT is hardly surprising, from what we have seen in the foregoing, that Books II and III of the *Treatise* were no more successful with the general public than Book I (they were published successively). For in these books Hume was as faithful to the stern Muse of Science as in the theory of knowledge; and this Muse who, in the manifold and varied phenomena of human life, unswervingly follows only one road and pursues only one object—the serious and thorough search for unity and cohesion—this grave and solemn muse is worshipped and obeyed by but few. By the great majority she is regarded as dull and dry, whilst the Muse of the more superficial popular science will always appeal to the hearts of all men.

We saw that the psychological care and subtlety was as great in Book II of the *Treatise* as in Book I, and that Hume's logic was as fine and lucid in dealing with the legal problems of Book III as in treating the problems of the theory of knowledge in Book I. Therefore, the ethics of the *Treatise* must have bored the ordinary reader as much as its theory of knowledge. Moreover, this ethical work had the peculiarity of being a theory of law and government so thorough that it even examined the most important legal conceptions and principles, especially in the domain of property law. And there is nothing which fails more generally to interest the ordinary public than legal discourses, however important their subjects may be to the community.

But finally, how many of Hume's contemporary readers would be able to unravel the purpose or meaning of all these numerous inquiries, the thoroughness of which made the *Treatise* so voluminous, considering that not even philosophical writers of to-day are able to do so?

In the *Essays* Hume served the Muse of popular philosophy; therefore the virtues of the *Treatise* appeared to him to be so many faults. And these faults, of course, had to be removed from the ethics as well as from the theory of knowledge contained in the *Essays*. Everywhere we find him pursuing the same consideration of popularization.

First of all the unity and cohesion between the inquiries must be eliminated, in the same way as in the *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, each being contained in one separate essay. Moreover, the thoroughness of logic and psychology might be spared; after all, people would not understand it.

It was only to be expected that especially the psychology of the passions and the theory of law and government would suffer from this vulgarization. This psychology, which covered some 150 pages of the Treatise, was condensed into a very meagre essay of 27 pages, entitled *A Dissertation on the Passions*. And the theory of law and government was entirely exploded. Fragments or reminiscences of the latter recur here and there in the political and economic essays. Larger fragments of the theory of law, on the other hand, may be found in various parts of the great essay *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*.

The moral philosophy which had been somewhat niggardly treated in the Treatise was, on the other hand, given due honour and prominence in this Essay and was treated more thoroughly, or rather more elaborately. The presentation here is, in reality, as we shall presently see, nothing but a more detailed account of the ideas already advanced in the Treatise. The reason for this more elaborate treatment of moral philosophy in the Essays, and the virtual omission of the theory of law and government, was probably not only the far greater interest which subjects of moral philosophy might be expected to arouse, but no doubt also Hume's desire to amend the only part which he had neglected to any appreciable extent in the Treatise.

Considering that the psychology of emotions had to be compressed to 27 pages in the *Dissertation on the Passions*, it is evident that Hume had to omit entirely the precise and complete analysis of all the ideas forming elements of the compound emotions which particularly distinguished Book II of the Treatise. As in the *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, only the results are included in this essay; the actual careful analysis is left out. As a consequence of this procedure, which is repeated everywhere in the Essays, their psychology has become so diluted and faint that they do not convey the vaguest impression of Hume as the master explorer of the human soul or of the great wealth of observations and research which the Treatise contains in this

respect. The *Dissertation on the Passions*, however, has one advantage compared with Book II of the Treatise, though it is only a formal one, and not of great importance. In the Dissertation Hume deals with the simple feelings before the compound emotions, which is the natural course (*Dissert. P.*, sect. i), whilst the process is reversed in the Treatise. The presentation has thereby gained in lucidity and arrangement.

With the exception of these alterations the *Dissertation on the Passions* is, as suggested above, only a short summary of the conclusions to which the analysis in Book II of the Treatise led. The simple feelings are treated first, and, as in the Treatise, he concentrates on the phenomena of hope and fear. His observations on these are practically copied word for word from the Treatise (cf. *Dissert. P.*, pp. 139-41, and *Treat. P.*, pp. 214-21).

In the treatment of the compound emotions we find again the distinction between the object and cause of the feeling, and as in the Treatise it is demonstrated that the object is constant, viz. either the individual himself or herself (in pride and humility) or another individual (in love and hatred), whilst the causes may vary greatly. The most important causes are briefly enumerated, whilst in the Treatise they were thoroughly analysed (*Dissert. P.*, sects. ii-iv).

However abridged the account may be, Hume nevertheless manages everywhere to stress his main point of view from the Treatise, that all sensations, simple as well as compound, are closely dependent on ideas. Similarly, he points out in conclusion (*Dissert. P.*, sect. v) that the will depends on the feelings.

The precision with which Hume transcribes the Treatise in this essay may also be observed by the fact that the inconsistency of the Treatise, referred to above in the chapter on the Ethics of the Treatise, is repeated, though not as clearly as in the Treatise itself (*Dissert. P.*, pp. 144-5 and 159).

The description of the nature of sympathy, on the other hand, is almost entirely omitted in this essay and transferred to the passages on moral philosophy in the *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*. Here it is plainly revealed how the essay form has mutilated the philosophy of the Treatise, for Hume was unable in these two essays, which were published at different times, to preserve that cohesion which on this point existed

between the psychology of Book II of the Treatise and the moral philosophy of Book III. The Essays, therefore, give us only fragments of Hume's philosophy. But this must be read coherently, i.e. in the Treatise.

The theory of law and government in the Treatise was equally abridged, but even more mutilated. As previously mentioned, we find some fragments of the theory of law in the *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*. Having dealt with the other social virtues in this essay Hume naturally mentions justice, but it is given a very modest place, whereas in the Treatise it commanded practically all the attention. This inquiry is really true to its name: it is moral philosophy, pure and simple, and justice is given only the treatment which corresponds to its position among the social virtues. The account of moral philosophy, of course, thereby gains in lucidity and completeness, but it is evident that the theory of law suffers a corresponding loss.

By justice Hume in the *Enq. M.* still means the same as in the Treatise, viz. legal justice. Therefore he also here calls it an artificial virtue (*Enq. M.*, pp. 195, 196, and 273); like the State it is an invention of man, whilst the other social virtues, goodwill, compassion, love, &c., are implanted in us by nature. Moreover, justice is not always useful in the individual case. On this latter point Hume is neither in the Treatise nor in the *Enq. M.* unaware of the problem of law and morals, although he makes no distinction between moral and legal justice (cf. *Enq. M.*, p. 273, and *Treat. M.*, p. 269).

Notwithstanding the brevity of the treatment of justice in the *Enq. M.*, Hume nevertheless clearly states his views on the origin of both law and society. As in the Treatise he criticizes the so-called state of nature (*Enq. M.*, pp. 184-5), and points out that man has at any rate always lived in a 'family-society'.

The two circumstances of nature which in his opinion have caused the creation of society and of law, especially property, viz. the limited and scanty resources of nature to satisfy human needs, and the egotism of man, are emphasized and illustrated as strongly as in the Treatise. The individual nature of the right of property is stressed even more than in the Treatise, for those theories which are nowadays associated with socialism, but which at that time had no specific name, were described in the



Enquiry as 'fanatical' and 'unpractical' (*Enq. M.*, p. 188). The circumstances from which property rights arise are briefly referred to in the essay (p. 189), but Hume is, of course, careful not to go into details on these and other points of property law.

As I endeavoured to show in the account of the ethics of the Treatise, Hume's political opinions, his Tory views, were a simple consequence of the theory of government in the Treatise. This is particularly corroborated by the passages on constitutional law in Hume's political and economic essays. In the same way as in the Treatise he criticizes the contract view of the origin of the State, and raises the same historical and legal objections that we find in his juvenile work (cf. particularly the essay 'Of the Origin of Government', pp. 113-17, and 'Of the Original Contract', pp. 443-60). Here he strongly emphasizes the monarchical origin of the State and discloses very clearly and concisely (especially on p. 456) the *petitio principii* on which the contract theory is based. The people must obey their government, not because they have promised to do so once upon a time, but because otherwise the community cannot survive, and if we ask Hume which form of government the people shall obey, he replies: the existing government; and in the true Tory spirit he adds that happy is the people that can answer the question thus: our present sovereign, who inherits, in a direct line, from ancestors that have governed us for many ages.

All those essays, or rather all those parts of the philosophy of the Essays, which we have hitherto compared with the Treatise, the theory of knowledge as well as the psychology, the theory of law and government, have revealed no development whatever from Hume's original thoughts. They even marked a decline because on practically all points their contents were both quantitatively and qualitatively inferior to the philosophy of the juvenile work.

In conclusion we shall now examine the only part of the philosophy of the Essays which may to some extent signify progress and development in Hume. This development is not very considerable; it actually only consists of a more precise, more conscious elaboration of the ideas already laid down in the Treatise.

This is the moral philosophy in the *Enquiry concerning the*

*Principles of Morals*. Hume has undoubtedly expended much more labour on this essay than on any other. He thought very highly of it himself, and says that in his opinion it is 'of all my writings, historical, philosophical, or literary, incomparably the best'. And there is no doubt that from the point of view of style this work is of a much higher order not only than the *Treatise*—this does not mean very much, as the merits of the *Treatise* are not due to its form—but than the greatest number of the other essays.

But there is another difference of form between the *Enquiry* and the *Treatise*, and this is not all to the unqualified advantage of the *Enquiry*. For in the *Enquiry* not only the style but also the tone is different from that of the juvenile work.

Before the publication of the third book of the *Treatise*, Hume submitted it to Professor Hutcheson for his judgement and critical scrutiny. Hutcheson's opinion was generally approving, but he observed *inter alia* that he missed 'a certain warmth in the cause of virtue, which all good men would wish and could not displease amidst abstract inquiries'. Hume, however, did not allow this objection to influence the *Treatise*, for he answered Hutcheson that he had deliberately, on principle, omitted all enthusiasm and warmth from the moral inquiries of the *Treatise*. There were, he wrote, two different ways to describe the soul as well as the body. One was that of critical research, the other that of poetical or artistic description. With regard to the body these two methods were represented by anatomy and painting. As for the soul, which alone he examined, he would employ the former method in the *Treatise*. He wanted to be a spiritual anatomist, not a painter; a psychologist, not a moralist. The *Treatise* was not to recite, but to analyse (Burton, i. 112-113). Hutcheson's objection, however, is interesting and instructive, for it shows us one of the many causes of the failure of the *Treatise*. The literary public of the period really wanted, as Hutcheson said, to see virtue praised and vice repudiated and humiliated, not only on the stage, but also in philosophical works. The spiritual anatomy of the *Treatise* was beyond the public. Hume repeated his reply to Hutcheson on the very last pages of the third book of the *Treatise*. But it did not help him. The public never got to the end of the *Treatise*.

In the Essays, on the other hand, Hume considered Hutcheson's objection, especially in the *Enq. M.* Here he is a painter all the time, or perhaps rather a poet. In describing the nature of sympathy (*Enq. M.*, sect. v) he rises almost to the same poetic heights as in the above-mentioned essays 'The Epicurean', 'The Stoic', &c.

Virtue is extolled and depicted in gay colours; vice is condemned and humbled. This is all the easier for Hume, as the foundation of his ethics is sympathy, and not selfishness. Consequently the social virtues are glorified and illustrated by historical examples. Self-interest is energetically reprov'd, and the philosophers who would deduce all morals from egotism are called paradoxical (*Enq.*, Appendix II). Moreover, it is a matter of course that the unfortunate philosophers who are entirely outside morals, 'beyond good and evil', are called 'disingenuous disputants' (sect. i).

This, however, is only the form, the tone; it merely tells us about the concessions Hume made to his public. What we ought to investigate are the real merits of the Enquiry as compared with the moral philosophy of the Treatise.

The Treatise was chiefly concerned with the foundation of morals. In the first part it was shown that the moral distinctions were not derived from reason but from sentiment, and in Parts II and III it was emphasized that this sentiment must be sympathy or fellow feeling.

This point of view is stated equally clearly and definitely in the Enquiry (*Enq. M.*, sects. i-ix). All moral distinction, it says, arises out of a general sentiment of blame and approbation; and this sentiment Hume calls alternatively sympathy or humanity; in the Enquiry these terms are used by Hume as synonymous (pp. 248-52 and Appendix I).

But the Enquiry contains something more than this. It deals not only with the foundation of morals; it also includes that which was lacking in the moral philosophy of the Treatise, viz. a clearly defined and universally applied ethical standard. This standard is everywhere in the Enquiry termed *utility*, *useful*.

Actually, this utilitarian standard is implied already in the Treatise. In examining the ethical virtues Hume certainly realizes that our approbation of them arises immediately,

instinctively from sympathy, not from theoretical deliberations; but this does not bar us from examining in the ethics whence this sympathy actually originates, or rather which quality of the virtues produces our sympathetic approval. And Hume then discovers that this very quality is utility, that which is beneficial to society.

But this appreciation of social utility as the ethical standard only appears at the conclusion of the moral philosophy of the *Treatise*, as its result, and not as its guiding principle. And it is only here that the terms 'useful' and 'utility' occur (*Treat. M.*, Part III, sect. v).

In the *Enquiry*, on the other hand, this view is consistently applied from the very beginning, all ethical virtues being measured by this standard, and the same applies to legal justice. No word is used more frequently in the *Enquiry* than 'utility' and its variants. The *Enquiry*, therefore, may be said to contain the best account of Hume's ethical views, in so far as we find everywhere a clear and definite statement of both the foundation and the standard of his ethics, but only in that sense, for in reality the ideas are the same in both works, they have merely found a better expression on this point in the *Essays* than in the *Treatise*.

From the point of view of political economy Hume is ahead of Adam Smith, having laid the foundation of this branch of science in his economic essays; and from the point of view of ethics he is ahead of Bentham, his *Enquiry* on moral philosophy containing the foundation of utilitarianism.

## CONCLUSION

**I**N a passage in the *Treatise* dealing with the psychology of passions, where Hume analyses the feelings of pride, he describes how highly ambitious characters are as a rule very easily influenced by the opinions and judgements of their fellows. Unwittingly Hume thus leaves us a contribution to the study of his own psychology. The judgement or estimate at the back of the failure of the *Treatise*, and the success of the *Essays*, gradually influenced Hume to such an extent that he ultimately identified these views with his own. He threw the entire blame on the *Treatise* instead of on the public, and the more fame he gained by his *Essays*, the dearer they became to him and the greater was his displeasure at the *Treatise*.

It is this displeasure, therefore, which prompted Hume to make the public denouncement of the *Treatise* shortly before his death. He thus definitely surrendered to the judgement of his public; but as we saw in the introductory chapter, neither this declaration nor Hume's other utterances contained any indication that this displeasure was due to any change in his views.

In this book we have examined the past history, the form and the contents of the philosophy of the *Essays*, and we have seen that they did not either suggest any such change.

Posterity, therefore, should not allow itself to be influenced by Hume's own judgement any more than by the public judgement on the *Treatise*, but should only consider its intrinsic value and compare it with that of the *Essays*.

As regards this estimate, can there be any doubt about the result? If we leave out the philosophy of religion, Hume has both begun and ended his philosophical thinking in the *Treatise*. In this juvenile work he penetrated as far into the problems of philosophy as he could, not only with the enthusiasm of youth but with the gravity and thoroughness of manhood, and he never progressed farther. What he produced in the *Essays* was only a repetition of himself. And how was this reproduction? It gave us only fragments where the *Treatise* gave us unity and

cohesion, a popular causerie instead of the psychology and logic of the Treatise.

And finally, through this repetition Hume had to surrender some of his own Self to an irrelevant cause.

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